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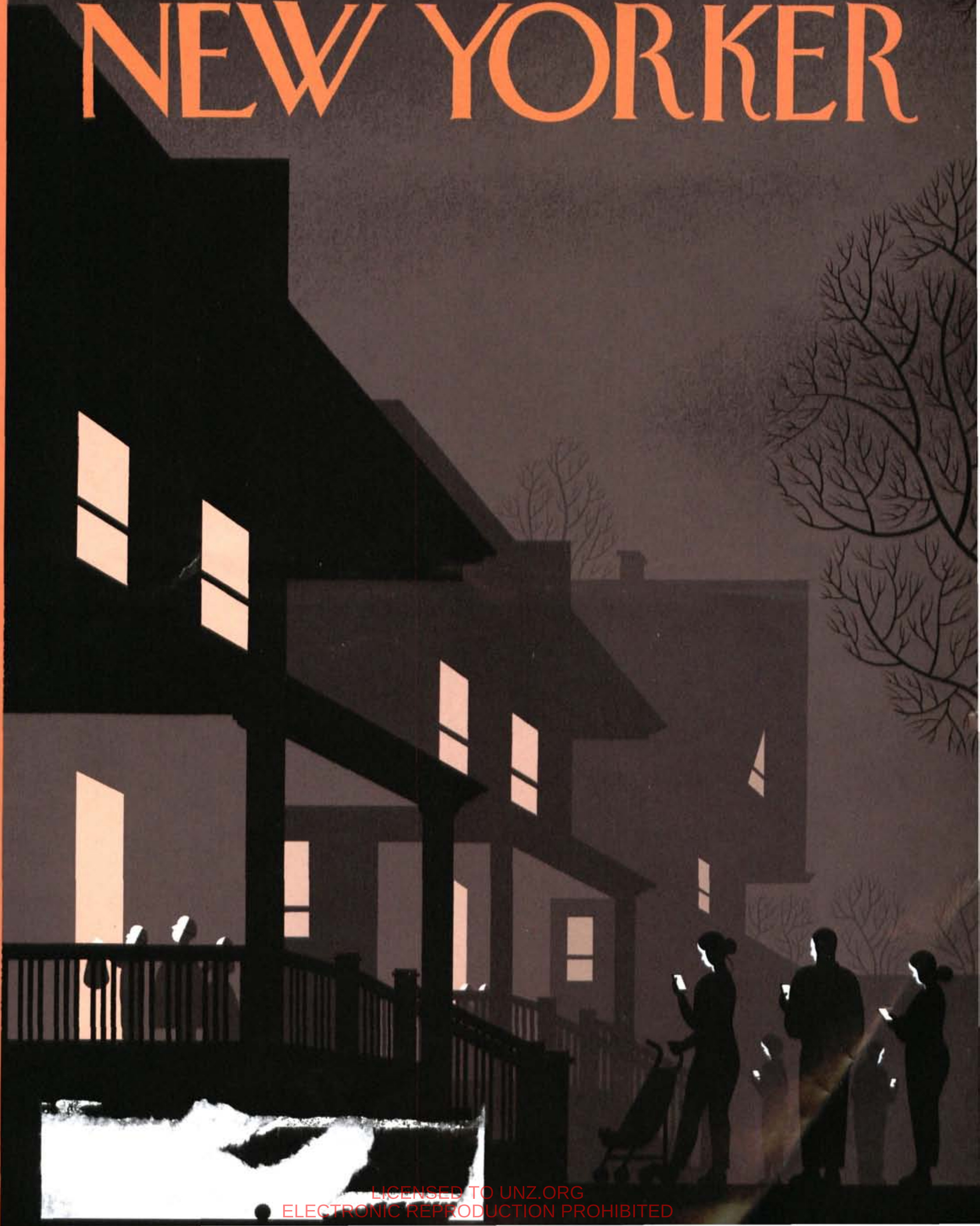
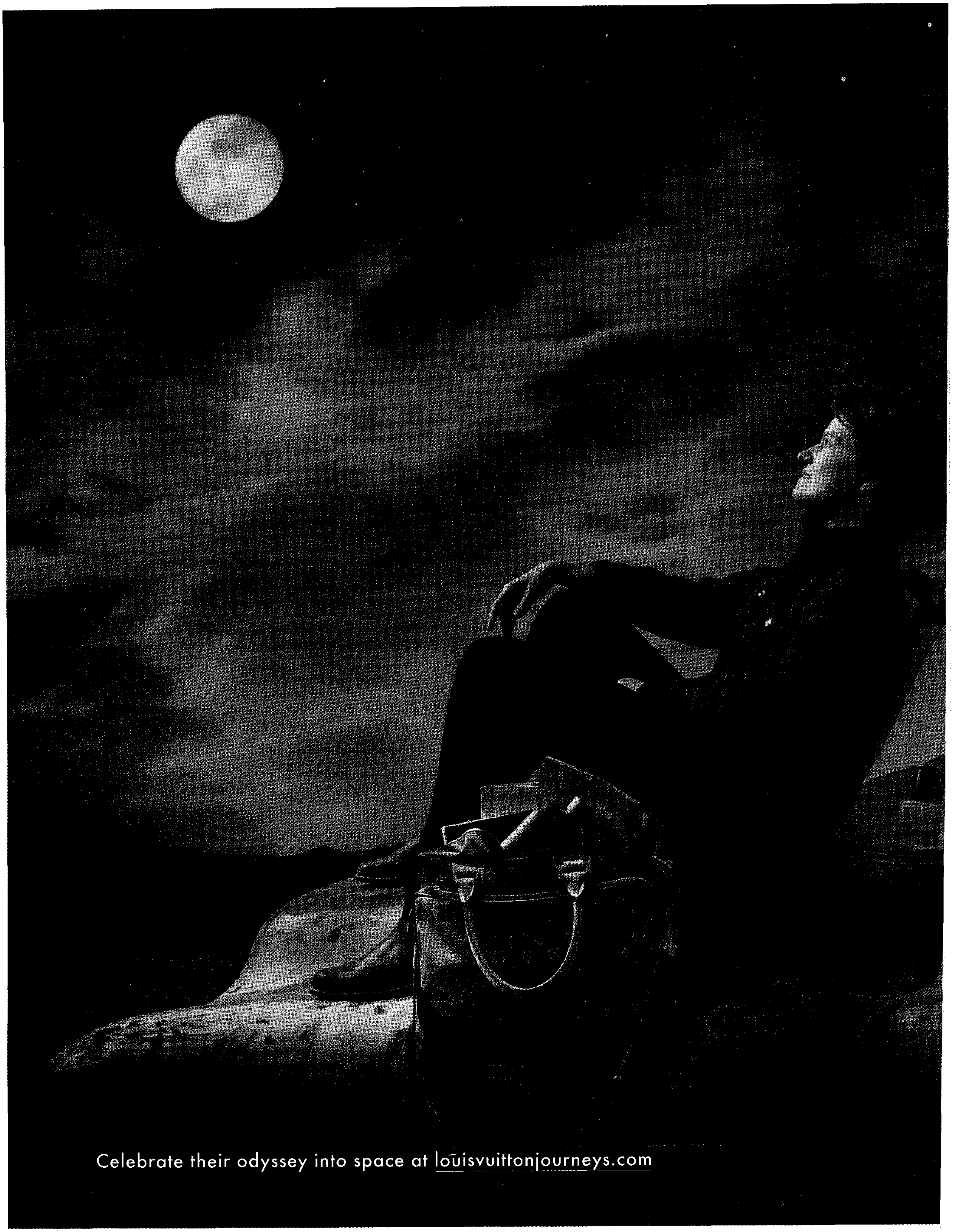
THE NEW YORKER

NOV. 2, 2009





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THE NEW YORKER
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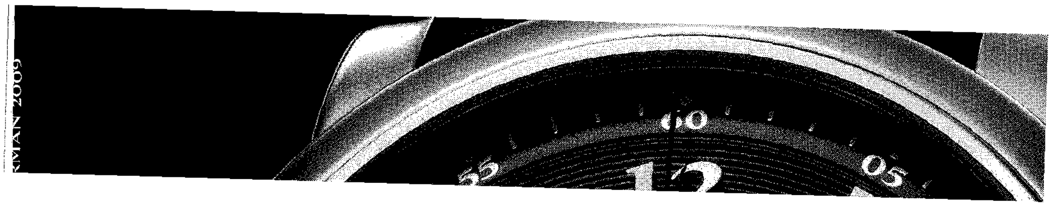

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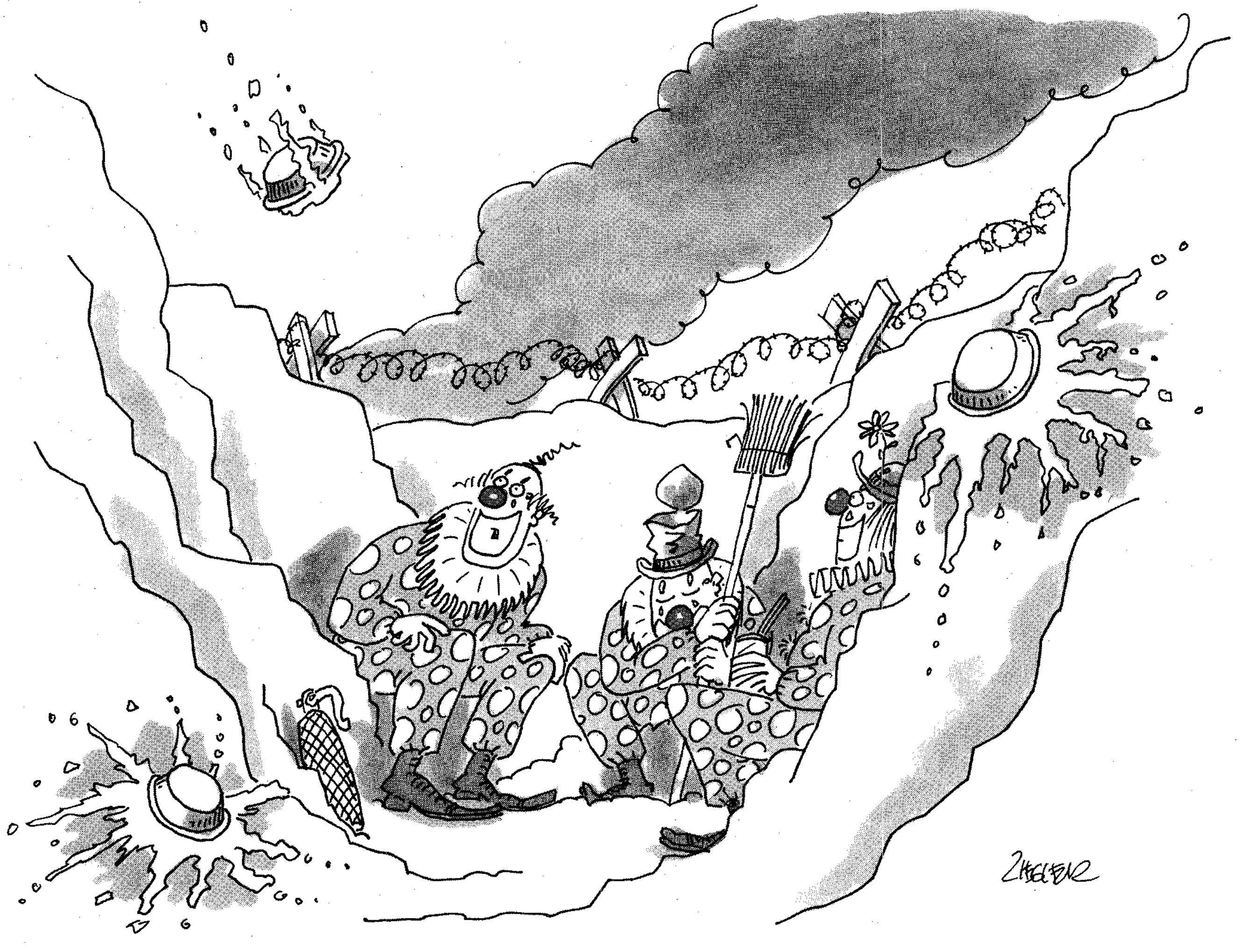

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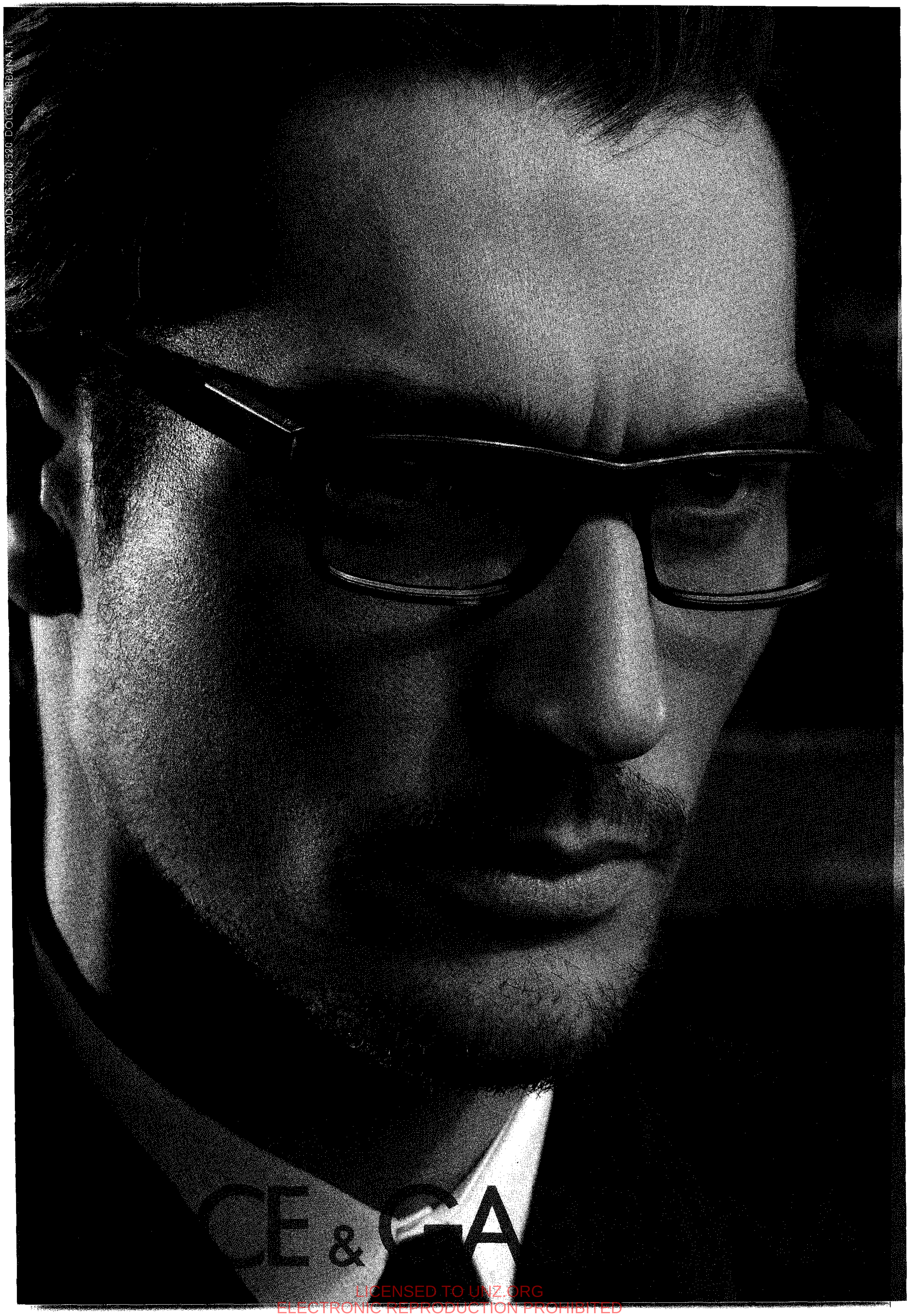
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CONTRIBUTORS

Louis Menand (Comment, p. 39) is a professor of English at Harvard. His new book, "The Marketplace of Ideas," will be published in January.

Richard Brody ("Wild, Wild Wes," p. 48), a staff member, is the author of "Everything Is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard."

Barbara Demick ("The Good Cook," p. 58) is the Beijing bureau chief of the Los Angeles *Times*. Her book "Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea" comes out in December.

Ian Frazier (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 65) won the 2009 Thurber Prize for his book "Lamentations of the Father."

Nina Zivancevic (Poem, p. 68) is a poet, literary critic, journalist, and translator. One of her poems is included in an expanded version of "The Horse Has Six Legs," an anthology of Serbian poetry, which is due out in the spring.

Roz Chast ("Introducing Crankster," p. 90), a cartoonist and illustrator, is working on a children's book.

Kate Taylor (The Talk of the Town, p. 42) is an arts writer and the editor of "Going Hungry," an anthology of essays about eating disorders.

Jerome Groopman ("Robots That Care," p. 66), the Recanati Professor of Medicine at Harvard, has published four books, including "The Anatomy of Hope" and "How Doctors Think."

Chris Ware ("Unmasked," cover and p. 84) is a cartoonist and graphic novelist. The twentieth issue of his periodical, *The ACME Novelty Library*, will be published next year.

Alex Gregory ("Talk Show," p. 92) was a contributor to "Things I've Learned from Women Who've Dumped Me," a collection of essays, edited by Ben Karlin, which came out in January. His cartoons have appeared in the magazine since 1999.

Javier Marías (Fiction, p. 96) is an award-winning Spanish writer whose work has been translated into thirty-seven languages. "Your Face Tomorrow: Poison, Shadow, and Farewell," the conclusion of his three-volume novel, comes out next month.

Zachary Kanin ("The Shocking Truth About Vampires!," p. 94) published "The Short Book" in 2007. He is working on his first graphic novel.

Elizabeth Kolbert (Books, p. 110) is a staff writer.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

The début of Cartoon Kit: put together your own cartoons and enter a new contest. / *Jerome Groopman* chats live with readers about robots and medicine. / Multimedia: *Barbara Demick* on North Korea; *Peter Schjeldahl* on Arshile Gorky. / Video: *Atul Gawande* at The New Yorker Festival; *Jorge Colombo's* Finger Painting; *Richard Brody* on "The Darjeeling Limited." / Blogs: *Hendrik Hertzberg* on politics, *John Cassidy* and *James Surowiecki* on economics, *Macy Halford* on books, and much more. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a complete archive of issues, back to 1925.

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Christmas In The Heart

BOB DYLAN
Christmas in the Heart

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"Little Drummer Boy,"
and "O' Come All Ye Faithful"

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THE MAIL

THE RISE AND FALL

Nick Paumgarten mentions various cycles, such as pi or sunspots, as suggesting or predicting the ups and downs of financial markets ("The Secret Cycle," October 12th). The human life cycle itself might be another influence. As markets crash or drop, it might be reasonable to suppose that the market movers at the time get fired or indicted, become bankrupt or retire. One might also assume that it takes about 8.6 years (one of the cycles mentioned) for their risk-averse replacements to age out and be replaced themselves by a new class of market influencers who have become aggressive in the search for fortunes.

Paul Taylor
Asheville, N.C.

REVITALIZING THE ECONOMY

Ryan Lizza, in his article on the Obama Administration's economic team, paraphrases Christina Romer as saying that the fiscal multiplier of a dollar of government spending raises the G.D.P. by a dollar fifty, while a dollar of tax cuts yields a fiscal multiplier of a dollar or less, because some of the tax cut is saved ("Inside the Crisis," October 12th). The reason that the fiscal multiplier is greater than one (i.e., one dollar yields a dollar fifty) is that government spending engenders further spending or investing of non-government money that also ends up contributing to the G.D.P. Similarly, while some part of a tax cut will be saved, a portion will be spent or invested, and it will probably also engender further spending or investment. In the debate over whether the private or the public sector is better at stimulating the economy, ideologues ignore the question of how and when money is used. Is the best delivery mechanism direct government spending or tax cuts? It depends.

Roland Lochoff
Westport, Conn.

The photograph of the White House economic team shows four white men and a white woman. All the men are dressed in identical dark-blue or black suits, and all are wearing maroon ties with tiny white polka dots, except Timothy Geithner, the maverick, who opted for a plain plum tie. Do they call each other every morning and ask what the others are planning to wear that day, or what? No wonder the economy is in trouble, if this is an example of the boldness these men possess. Couldn't just one of them—in summer, after all—wear a light-colored suit or maybe, Heaven forfend, an orange or a green tie?

Thomas Shaffer
Ocean View, Del.

SECRETS FOR SALE

Contrary to Walter Block's reasoning, elicited by Lizzie Widdicombe, there is a good reason that blackmail is criminal (The Talk of the Town, October 19th). It is not mere gossip, which, if harmful, can be remedied in a civil suit. It is the threat of doing harm in exchange for money. In classical economic theory (to which the libertarian Block presumably subscribes), money is voluntarily exchanged for goods or services; this underlies the libertarian argument for legalization of drugs and prostitution. But I don't believe that either Block or Friedrich Hayek or Milton Friedman would argue that refraining from doing you harm constitutes goods or services worth money. It is hardly a voluntary exchange, either. If it were, then blackmail, "protection," extortion, and even armed robbery, all of which, in their logical structure, amount to the exchange "Your money or your life," would be legal.

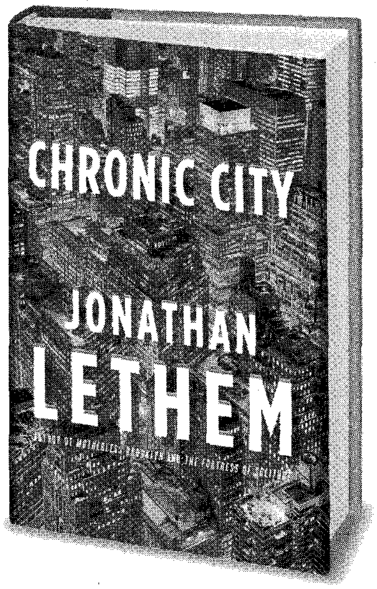
Albert S. Kirsch
Bal Harbour, Fla.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

LETHEM DOES MANHATTAN

"ASTONISHING... *The Fortress of Solitude* was a great novel... but *Chronic City* is even better."
—*The New York Times Book Review*



"A STELLAR, multi-layered novel."—*GQ*

"Makes a reader ache for a city long gone."
—*Esquire*

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"Purgatorio," in Times Square. *Photograph by Yola Monakhov.*

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
IDIOT LOVER

The Willem Dafoe resurgence is complete: not only is he currently on movie screens in Lars von Trier's "Antichrist" but he's also starring in Richard Foreman's "Idiot Savant," at the Public. In either case, you can count on Dafoe to try his best to elucidate the inscrutable. (See page 10.)

NIGHT LIFE
RIGHT PLACE

When the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame gathers stars in New York, it's typically at a buttoned-up venue like the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. For its twenty-fifth anniversary, though, it's taking over Madison Square Garden. U2, Bruce Springsteen, Metallica, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, and Eric Clapton are among the acts scheduled to perform. (See page 13.)

ART
ALL ACCESS

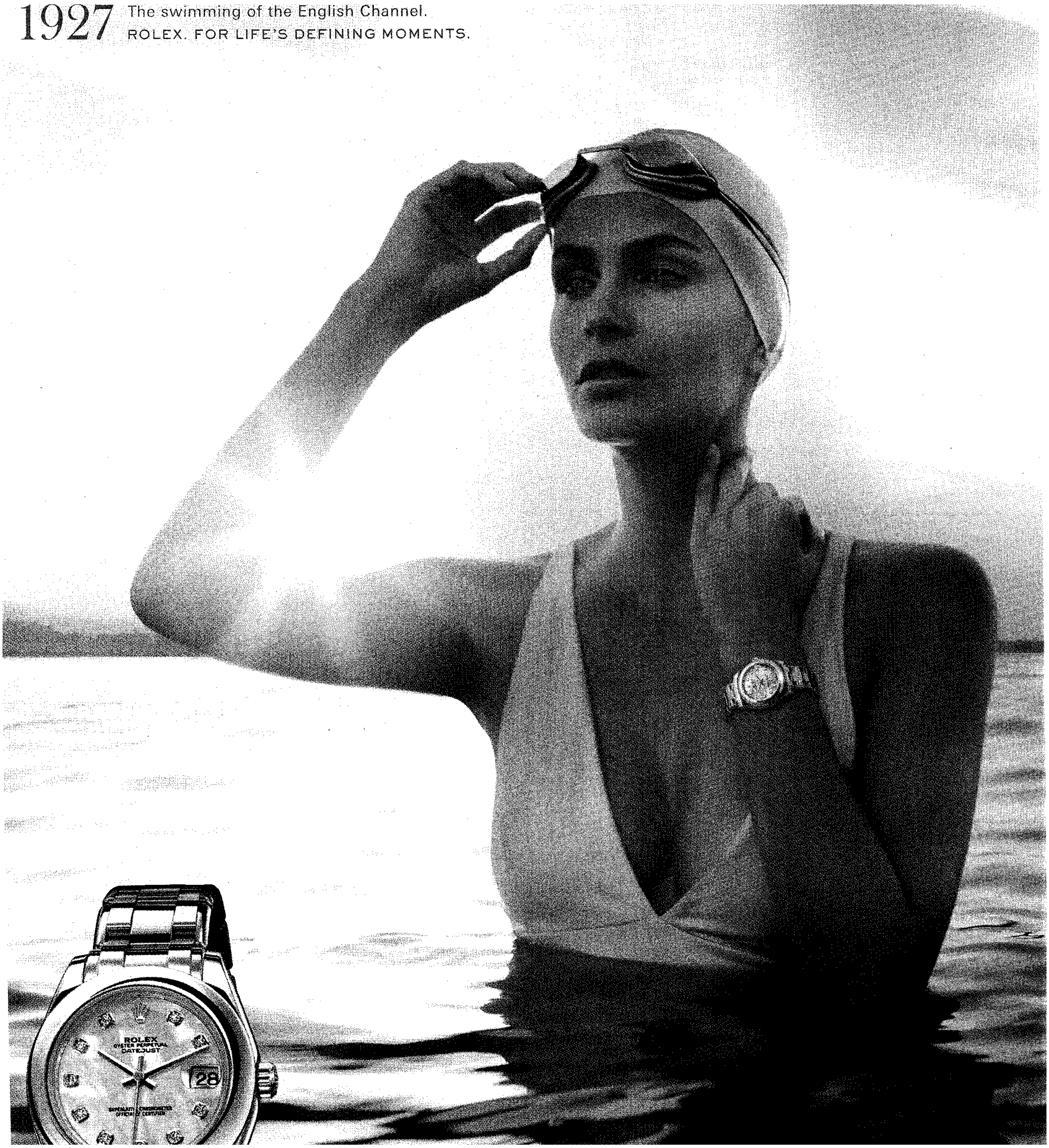
The New Museum gives the ingenious Swiss artist Urs Fischer the run of its Bowery building for an exhibition that's been four years in the making. Titled "Marguerite de Ponty"—a nom de plume of the poet Stéphane Mallarmé—the show includes a walk-in sculpture involving more than twenty-five thousand photographs and twelve tons of chromed steel. (See page 22.)

MOVIES
THE FEAR FACTORY

Roger Corman, the legendary low-budget impresario who helped to launch the careers of Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese, is also a director with a particular affinity for the macabre. For Halloween week, Anthology presents Corman's seven Edgar Allan Poe adaptations, along with some of his other cult classics, including "X: The Man with the X-Ray Eyes." (See page 32.)

AUCTIONS
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

With the economy beginning to revive, the big auction houses are hoping that buyers are feeling more bullish about Impressionist and modern art, two of their most lucrative enterprises. Christie's goes first with an evening sale that features an important Pissarro painting, "Le Quai Malaquais et l'Institut." (See page 34.)


1927 The swimming of the English Channel.
ROLEX. FOR LIFE'S DEFINING MOMENTS.
ROLEX
OYSTER PERPETUAL
DATEJUST
28
SUPERLATIVE CHRONOMETER
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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ANTIGONE
Anne Bogart directs Jocelyn Clarke's adaptation of the tragedy, which kicks off the SITI Company's season. Oct. 28-Nov. 1. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077.)

BRITS OFF BROADWAY
The annual festival begins with Matt Wilkinson's "Red Sea Fish," directed by Franklyn McCabe. Plays by Alan Ayckbourn and Toby Davies will also be included, along with cabaret by Simon Green. Opens Nov. 3. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE BROTHER/SISTER PLAYS
Tarell Alvin McCraney premières a trilogy of stories centered on an extended family living in the bayou. Produced in association with McCarter Theatre. Tina Landau directs "Part 1: In the Red and Brown Water"; Robert O'Hara directs "Part 2: The Brothers Size" and "Marcus; or, The Secret of Sweet." In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

CHILDREN AT PLAY
Jordan Seavey wrote this farce, about the tribulations of five friends in high school. Scott Ebersold directs. Previews begin Oct. 29. (Living Theatre, 21 Clinton St. 212-352-3101.)

CREATURE
Heidi Schreck wrote this comedic play, about a young woman in medieval times who tries to become a saint in spite of her susceptibility to earthly pleasures. Leigh Silverman directs the Page 73 and New Georges co-production. In previews. Opens Nov. 2. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 866-811-4111.)

FELA!
Bill T. Jones directs and choreographs this musical about Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the politically active musician who pioneered Afro-beat. With a book by Jim Lewis and Jones; music performed onstage by members of Antibalas. In previews. (O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

FINIAN'S RAINBOW
The "Encores!" production of the 1947 musical, about an Irishman and his daughter who travel to America to bury a pot of gold, has been expanded for Broadway. Jim Norton, Kate Baldwin, Cheyenne Jackson, and Christopher Fitzgerald star; with music by Burton Lane, a book by Yip Harburg and Fred Saidy, and lyrics by Harburg. Warren Carlyle directs and choreographs. In previews. Opens Oct. 29. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

IDIOT SAVANT
Willem Dafoe stars in the world première of an avant-garde philosophical comedy written and directed by Richard Foreman, presented in association with the Ontological-Hysteric Theatre. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

IN THE NEXT ROOM OR THE VIBRATOR PLAY
Les Waters directs Sarah Ruhl's Broadway début, a comedy about marriage, starring Laura Benanti and Michael Cerveris. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE LATE CHRISTOPHER BEAN
The Actor's Company Theatre puts on Sidney Howard's 1930 comedy, in which a country doctor is holding a stash of valuable paintings. Previews begin Nov. 1. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE LILY'S REVENGE
Taylor Mac applies his sui-generis method, which includes Noh, dance, puppet theatre, and vaudeville, to a story about a lily who wants to become a man. Opens Oct. 29. (HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

LOVE CHILD
A play written and performed by Daniel Jenkins and Robert Stanton, directed by Carl Forsman, in which the actors portray actors performing a play on opening night, and interact with the audience. In previews. Opens Oct. 31. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

MADE IN HEAVEN
Jay Bernzweig wrote this comedy, in which conjoined twins propose to their mutual girlfriend. Andrew Shaifer directs, at SoHo Playhouse. In previews. Opens Nov. 2. (15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555.)

THE MISUNDERSTANDING
At the Flea, Horizon Theatre Rep presents the play by Albert Camus, about a man who returns home after a twenty-year absence. Alex Lippard directs. Previews begin Oct. 29. (41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

THE NEW ELECTRIC BALLROOM
Druid Theatre performs a play by Enda Walsh, about three Irish sisters who obsess over a rock singer they met in the nineteen-sixties. In previews. Opens Nov. 1. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

NIGHTINGALE
Manhattan Theatre Club presents this play written and performed by Lynn Redgrave, about her grandmother Beatrice. Joseph Hardy directs. In previews. Opens Nov. 3. (City Center Stage I, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

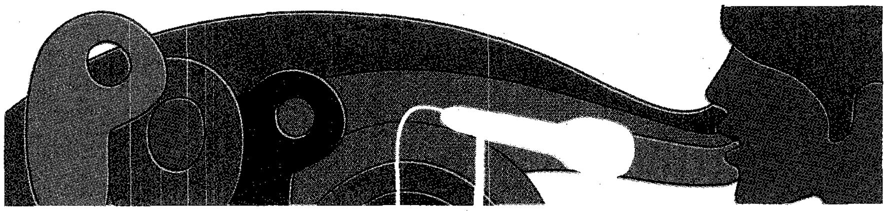
OR
Maggie Siff ("Mad Men") stars in Liz Duffy Adams's comedy, about Aphra Behn, the seventeenth-century playwright who ditched her career as a spy for show business. Wendy McClellan directs the Women's Project production. Previews begin Oct. 29. Opens Nov. 3. (Julia Miles, 424 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

RAGTIME
Marcia Milgrom Dodge directs and choreographs the 1998 musical, based on the book by E. L. Doctorow, about life in New York City at the turn of the twentieth century. With a book by Terrence McNally and music and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty. In previews. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.)

THE STARRY MESSENGER
Kenneth Lonergan wrote and directs this drama for the New Group, starring Matthew Broderick, as a divorced teacher at a planetarium, and Catalina Sandino Moreno ("Maria Full of Grace"), as the single mother he falls in love with. In previews. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE UNDERSTUDY
Scott Ellis directs the New York première of Theresa Rebeck's backstage comedy, starring Julie White, Mark-Paul Gosselaar, and Justin Kirk. Presented by Roundabout Theatre Company. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

WHAT ONCE WE FELT
A new play by Ann Marie Healy, presented by LCT3, directed by Ken Rus Schmoll, about the last novel ever printed. In previews. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010.)



KARI MODEN

POP NOTES
MANY HAPPY RETURNS

Harper Simon may be his father's child, but he's no child. Simon, the oldest son of Paul Simon, was the subject of songs like "St. Judy's Comet" ("Little sleepy boy / Do you know what time it is? / Well the hour of your bedtime's long been past"). He sang with his father on "Sesame Street," in 1976. Then he moved to London and started making music as part of the band Menlo Park. Now in his late thirties, he's finally a solo artist. The songs on **"Harper Simon"** (Vagrant) occupy the baroque edge of folk-pop, and while some ("Shooting Star") are more memorable than others ("The Audit"), all benefit from the help of a topnotch cast that includes studio vets like Charlie McCoy, Lloyd Green, and Mike Leech, as well as fellow celebrity kids Inara George (daughter of Lowell), Petra Haden (daughter of Charlie), and Sean Lennon (no explanation necessary). Harper's normal singing voice is a dead ringer for his father's; his falsetto, less effective, sounds like a less angelic Art Garfunkel. The album is only thirty minutes, almost an EP by modern standards, and it's at its strongest when it goes up-tempo. "Tennessee," which Harper and his dad wrote, is as sprightly as anything any Simon has done; with its twinkling pedal-steel, it's a lighter cousin to "Graceland" (which, incidentally, was also about Harper).

Richmond Fontaine, a Portland-based band led by the singer-songwriter Willy Vlautin, has just released **"We Used to Think the Freeway Sounded Like a River"** (Arena Rock), its ninth record and one of its best. The band is one of the finest proponents of what is sometimes called alt-country but is more properly described as woozy roots music, and Vlautin, who is also an acclaimed novelist, specializes in the telling detail. Often this results in compact narratives—on "The Boyfriends," one of the album's standouts, a guy meets a girl at a bar, accompanies her home, goes to bed with her, and is interrupted by the appearance of her young son ("I ain't like that," Vlautin's protagonist wails). The character sketch "43" uses a few taut lines to sketch a portrait of a man slowly being strangled by debt. None of the songs here are throwaways, and several—the openhearted plaint "Maybe We Were Both Born Blue," the crepuscular boxing tale "The Pull"—are tours de force.

—*Ben Greenman*

NOW PLAYING

AFTER MISS JULIE
Sienna Miller stars in Patrick Marber's adaptation of Strindberg's play from 1888. (Reviewed in this issue.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

AVENUE Q
The cast of this parody of "Sesame Street" and "The Real World" had six years on Broadway and a national tour to perfect numbers like "Everyone's a Little Bit Racist," "The Internet Is for Porn," and "You Can Be As Loud As the Hell You Want (When You're Makin' Love)"—a song that accompanies two puppets doing it in a wide variety of positions—before moving Off Broadway, and they succeeded. The hilariously off-color musical, about a young puppet who moves to an outer borough of New York City after college and falls in with a small crowd of eccentric neighbors,

[illegible]

written by Jeff Whitty, with music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, is pretty much perfect. After a recent performance, a twenty-something theatregoer exclaimed, "That was a million times better than 'Billy Elliot'!" The acting and singing by the seven-person (and multi-puppet) cast has unusual polish and verve, and the production values—for the set, lighting, costumes, and sound—are Broadway all the way. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

BYE BYE BIRDIE
This musical, from 1960, is set in Sweet Apple, Ohio, where the citizens apparently dress mostly in chartreuse, mauve, orange, periwinkle, and turquoise. Fifty years on, "Bye Bye Birdie" (under the acrylic direction and choreography of Robert Longbottom) is still as light, frothy, and irresistible as an egg cream. The plot revolves around Kim MacAfee, the recently pinned fifteen-year-old president of the fan club for the pop idol Conrad Birdie. She has been chosen by his record company to be the last person he kisses, on "The Ed Sullivan Show," before being inducted into the Army. The actors here are bright, but they don't know how to shine. John Stamos as Albert Peterson, Conrad's manager, and Gina Gershon as his Latina secretary, Rose Alvarez, have no whiff of humor about them and therefore no amperage. They make it work; they just don't make it memorable. The likable, wry score (the music is by Charles Strouse and the lyrics are by Lee Adams) is, finally, what remains evergreen: an anthem to an optimism that our uneasy society can hardly remember. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/26/09.) (Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

COUNTY OF KINGS
In compelling and well-performed iambics, whose artfulness somehow takes the hurt out of the horror, Lemon Andersen—a thirty-four-year-old half-Latino poet, performer, and actor—evokes and enacts the barbarous Brooklyn of his youth: Millie, his loving mother and an addict who died of AIDS; Lily, his fifteen-year-old Dominican doll; Mookie, his crack-dealing cohort; his gun-toting days; his prison time. In his one-man show (developed and directed by Elise Thoron), Andersen paints a vivid word picture of the underclass and of his redemption from it. He holds our attention so confidently partly because, when she was alive, he held his mother's. He's older now, but he's still someone to watch. (10/26/09) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

THE EMPEROR JONES
The Irish Rep revives Eugene O'Neill's 1920 Expressionist drama, about an African-American fugitive who takes up residence as "emperor" of an unnamed Caribbean island. When his subjects rebel, he is forced to flee through woods haunted by the many ghosts and Jungian demons of his repressed past. John Douglas Thompson hollers through the titular role of Brutus Jones with all the nuance of a freight train, mistaking Jones's arrogance for the self-absorption of a tantrum-prone seven-year-old. Ciaran O'Reilly's clumsy, ill-conceived direction defangs the script, watering down O'Neill's muddy, if provocative, hypothesis of tortured black psychology into pure melodrama. The overly designed environment and costumes are garish to the point of amateur, and the use of Halloween-store skeleton puppets in place of white actors feels like a cop-out from another, more awkwardly politically correct era. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

HAMLET
In Michael Grandage's barn-burning "Hamlet," imported from London's Donmar Warehouse, Jude Law has a sharp critical intelligence. But, no matter how expert his technique or how potent his charisma, it's impossible to conceive of him as "pigeon-liver'd" or lacking in "gall." This Hamlet is essentially heroic: for Law, there is no issue between being and seeming. He never goes over the edge—or even up to it. All protestations to the contrary, he is on top of everything, a posture that mutes the play's dark humor. Grandage's swashbuckling attack is meant for a mass audience, not for the reading room. If his interpretation lacks depth, the clear, strong melodramatic line of the plot still keeps the audience on an emotional roller coaster. (10/19/09) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

The blues singer Candye Kane celebrates Halloween, at City Winery.

ANNETTE MARNAT

LET ME DOWN EASY
In the brilliant tracery of her one-woman shows, Anna Deavere Smith listens, watches, records, then acts out both the verbatim testimony and the telltale evasions of each of her many subjects' syntax. Out of this vaudeville of observations—her judgment lies in the juxtaposition—she creates a vivid collaged world. Her newest work (well directed by Leonard Foglia) is an inquiry not into a big public event but into a big spiritual one: how we die. It has a terrific cumulative impact. She looks at everything from wounded machismo (a maimed bull rider, a boxer battered into a four-day coma) to the people who tend those wounds. Smith is doing more than opening up a much needed discussion about the dying and those who minister to them. The purpose of the enterprise, we realize, is for the playwright herself to learn how to die. It's bracing, poetic stuff. (10/19/09) (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

MEMPHIS
This new musical about the birth of rock and roll features a book by Joe DiPietro, music by David Bryan, and lyrics by DiPietro and Bryan. Christopher Ashley directs. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE NEIL SIMON PLAYS: BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS
David Cromer directs Simon's 1983 play, starring Laurie Metcalf and Dennis Boutsikaris. (Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-307-4100.)

ORDINARY DAYS
Roundabout Underground presents a new musical by Adam Gwon, directed by Marc Bruni, about the intertwining lives of four New Yorkers. (111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

SUCH THINGS ONLY HAPPEN IN BOOKS
A usable plot and a winning hand of cards have something in common, according to the cuckolded writer playing solitaire in "Such Things Only Happen in Books," the title play of five short works by Thornton Wilder presented at the Clurman by the Keen Company: neither shows itself very often. Wilder, it turns out, doesn't need a plot; his one-acts deftly explore the psychological complexity of simple folks. In "Cement Hands," an uncle puts his niece's tightwad fiancé in the hot seat by coercing him into paying for tea; in "In Shakespeare and the Bible," a young man is summoned by his fiancée's estranged aunt, who turns out to be the madam of a whorehouse he frequented in the not-so-distant past. The most uniformly charming thing about this production is the live interstitial music—a round sung by a few members of the cast, whistling, or a simple tune played on a xylophone. Otherwise, a couple of the plays seem fully realized by a strong cast, while the rest are still in the process of being found. (410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

Also Playing

BILLY ELLIOT THE MUSICAL: Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **A BOY AND HIS SOUL:** Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303. Through Nov. 1. **BROKE-OLOGY:** Mitzi E. Newhouse, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **CIRCLE MIRROR TRANSFORMATION:** Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **GOD OF CARNAGE:** Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIR: THE AMERICAN TRIBAL LOVE-ROCK MUSICAL:** Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **LOVE, LOSS, AND WHAT I WORE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200. **NEXT TO NORMAL:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **OLEANNA:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **OUR TOWN:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-868-4444. **THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD:** City Center Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **ROCK OF AGES:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **THE ROYAL FAMILY:** Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **SOUTH PACIFIC:** Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. **A STEADY RAIN:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **STILL LIFE:** Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. Through Nov. 1. **SUPERIOR DONUTS:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 39 STEPS:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **TWO UNRELATED PLAYS BY DAVID MAMET:** Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 212-279-4200. Through Nov. 1. **VIGIL:** DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.

WICKED: Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-239-6200. **WISHFUL DRINKING:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

ABOVE THE AUTO PARTS STORE
600 Bushwick Ave., Brooklyn (No phone)—The spastic duo **Lightning Bolt** is one of the most enduring acts to emerge from Fort Thunder, a warehouse-cum-commune situated in the Olneyville neighborhood of Providence, Rhode Island, that served as the incubator for a colorful avant-garde art-noise scene through the late nineties. On Oct. 30, the band plays at this eccentric venue, which is located above a NAPA Auto and Truck Parts, to support its recent record, "Earthly Delights." (For more information, visit www.toddpnyc.com.)

ASH'S PLACE
234 Wythe Ave, at N. 4th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (No phone)—Oct. 29: K Records, Calvin Johnson's independent label from Olympia, Washington, has dozens of local musicians who combine to create a unique Northwest sound. **Karl Blau** and **Lake,** two K Record acts that are releasing new albums and touring the U.S. together, have been entangled in each other's projects for years now. The beauty of both bands' music lies in contradiction: their music is spare yet lush, sophisticated yet childish. (For more information, visit www.toddpnyc.com.)

THE BELL HOUSE
149 7th St., between Second and Third Aves., Brooklyn (718-643-6510)—Oct. 29: The Krewe de Soul party, a masquerade charity ball to benefit the New Orleans-based child-care center Abeona House, features the **High & Mighty Brass Band,** the **Reverend Vince Anderson, Vic Thrill, Tunde Adebimpe, Mighty Fine,** the **Shalitas,** and **Les Sans Culottes.** Oct. 31: The **King Khan & BBQ Show** is a raucous act with a soft spot for the early heroes of rock and roll.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Oliver Ackermann founded the guitar-pedal company Death by Audio Effects in 2002, and he employs an army of Brooklynites to churn out specialty guitar pedals with names like the Fuzz War, the Super-Sonic Fuzz Gun, and the Total Sonic Annihilation (a local favorite). On Oct. 29, he'll probably have all of the guitar pedals on full blast with his accomplished shoegaze/post-punk act **A Place to Bury Strangers,** which is regarded by many as the loudest band in New York. Oct. 30: The **King Khan & BBQ Show** (see the Bell House). Nov. 1: The **Black Heart Procession** is a San Diego-based ensemble that crafts brooding, romantic compositions. With the **Mumlers** (see Bruar Falls). Nov. 2: Don't be fooled by the callowness of their name; the U.K. instrumental sound-masons the **Fuck Buttons** produce mightily sophisticated experimental music.

BRUAR FALLS
245 Grand St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (347-529-6610)—Nov. 3: The **Mumlers,** a dark and loungy band from San Jose. The moody crooning of the front man, Will Sprott, is not backed by horns so much as it is led by them. Also appearing are the **Fishermen Three,** who take their name from the nursery rhyme "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod," but don't play kids' music. Their country-folk sound can be gentle and lulling—at least until the mood is shattered by an electric-guitar solo or frenetic drums.

CAKE SHOP
152 Ludlow St. (212-253-0036)—October 28: The singer-songwriter **Liz Durrett,** based in Athens, Georgia, follows two local appearances opening for her uncle, Vic Chesnutt, with this show in an intimate setting. Durrett, whose songs are built around simple riffs with a languid Southern feel, has a smoky, dark voice and a demure presence. On her most recent album, the exquisite "Outside Our Gates," which came out last year and includes Chesnutt on backing vocals and guitar, she revealed a fondness for Memphis-style horns and intricate studio production. Solo, she's accompanied only by her own gentle guitar playing.

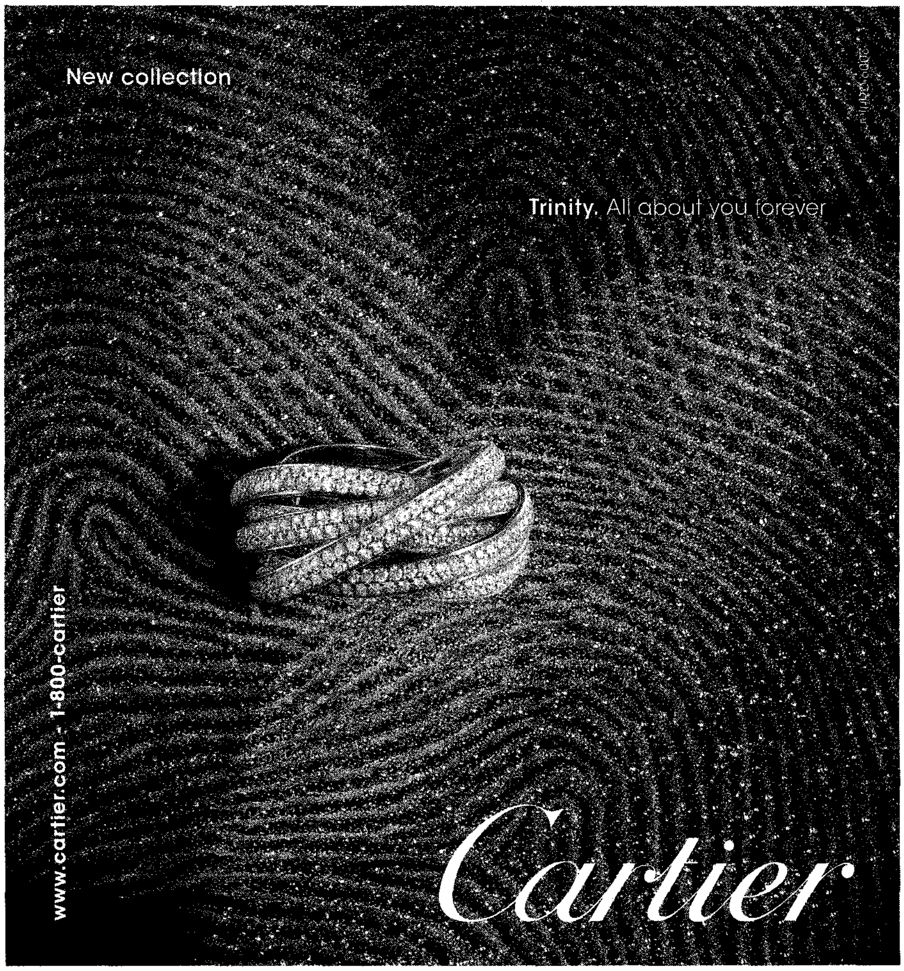
CITY WINERY
155 Varick St. (212-608-0555)—Oct. 30: The gospel-tinged local ensemble **Ollabelle.** With the jack-of-all-strings **Larry Campbell** (a veteran of Bob Dylan's never-ending tour) and the vocalist **Teresa Williams.** Oct. 31: The former adult entertainer and full-throated blues belter **Candye Kane** rides into town. Expect Kane, who recently beat pancreatic cancer, to deliver a powerful, life-affirming performance.

THE DELANCEY
168 Delancey St. (212-254-9920)—Nov. 2: Since January, the songwriter and pianist **Paul Wallfisch** has been curating a weekly series called Small Beast (named after the spinet piano that just fits on the tiny stage) that's brought a vast array of eclectic solo musicians, small bands, and side projects to this Lower East Side watering hole. While the musicians are crammed into tight quarters and the bar patrons can veer toward the rowdy, the music is generally superb (past highlights include performances by Little Annie, the cellist Julia Kent, and the theremin master Pamelia Kurstin). This week's installment features the sharply dressed **Honne Wells,** who blends fingerstyle guitar with guttural singing and a fascination with early American music, alongside **Adrienne Anemone,** the stage name of Adrienne Sneed, the performance-art-minded guitarist and singer of the sadly defunct all-female trio the Tuna Helpers. As with most Small Beast performances, the show is guided by Wallfisch, who skillfully lends humor, piano chops, and a set of his own husky and affecting songs to the evening.

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—Nov. 2: Tacoma's preëminent instrumental combo, the **Ventures,** first made their mark in 1960, with their signature surf-guitar workout "Walk—Don't Run." Over the next twelve years, they sent thirty-eight albums up the charts (the "Hawaii Five-O" theme was a big hit for them in 1969), and they remain the most successful instrumental pop act in history, having recorded more than two hundred and fifty albums.

KNITTING FACTORY
361 Metropolitan Ave., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (347-529-6696)—Oct. 28: The French singer **Emilie Simon** favors layered songs that often incorporate unusual instrumentation; for a song on the soundtrack of the original French release of "March of the Penguins," she clicked ice cubes together to create a beat. Oct. 31: Pairing the punch of vintage punk with catchy power-pop hooks, the **Figgs** have been slugging it out on the club circuit for more than two decades. They achieved a small measure of renown for backing Graham Parker for a few tours, but they seem destined to remain a rollicking bar band, which, one suspects, is just fine with them.

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (800-745-3000)—Oct. 29-30: The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame promised music legends at its twenty-fifth-anniversary benefit concerts, and it has delivered. The performers include **Bruce Springsteen** and the **E Street Band, Simon and Garfunkel, Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Friends, Paul Simon** (that's right, Simon will perform both solo and with Garfunkel), and **Stevie Wonder** on the first night. **Eric Clapton, Aretha Franklin, Metallica,** and **U2** will shake the arena the following night. Those who can't swing the ticket price (which tops out at $2,504.50 per night, convenience charge not included) can watch the highlights, which will run on HBO in November.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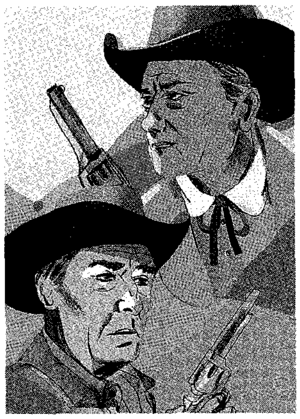
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
GO WEST, OLD MEN

In the nineteen-fifties, Fred Zinnemann ("High Noon") and George Stevens ("Shane") tried to freeze the Western genre into a single archetypal film, while directors like Budd Boetticher and Anthony Mann were taking it in bitter new directions. "Ride the High Country," Sam Peckinpah's elegiac work from 1962—screening at BAM on Oct. 28 in a New York Film Critics Circle series—is a gracious attempt to resolve these tensions. Two elderly gunslingers (Joel McCrea and Randolph Scott) transport some gold from a crude mining camp in the Sierras to a town where an occasional automobile appears on the streets. The West is still raw, violent, and sex-starved (the movie has a famous sequence—a wedding in a whorehouse, in which the groom's brothers think that they can sleep with the bride). But the frontier has disappeared, and the two men wonder what they gained from their long efforts. Honor? How much is it worth? Friendship? When does it count? It's a lovely summing-up. Shot by Lucien Ballard in ravishing color.

—David Denby



JUSTIN GABBARD

THE MARKET HOTEL
1142 Myrtle Ave., at Broadway, Brooklyn (No phone)—On Oct. 31, this Bushwick warehouse presents Phil Elverum's latest take on his longtime multimedia project **Mount Eerie**, which grew out of his previous act, the Microphones. The new and highly anticipated record, "Wind's Poem," continues Elverum's careerlong preoccupation with the moments of convergence between man and nature. With **Liturgy**, a project led by Hunter Hunt-Hendrix, who lives around the corner from the venue and produces transcendent metal soundscapes. (For more information, visit www.myspace.com/markethotelnyc.)

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-653-1703)—Oct. 31: The **Black Heart Procession** and the **Mumlers** (see the Bowery Ballroom).

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Oct. 29: The singer-songwriter **Harper Simon**, son of Paul.

MUSIC HALL OF WILLIAMSBURG
66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn (718-486-5400)—Oct. 28: A year ago, two Brooklyn community-planning organizations, Neighbors Allied for Good Growth and the People's Firehouse, Inc., gained the rights to repurpose the Williamsburg Engine Company 212 Firehouse into the Northside Town Hall Community and Cultural Center. The organization is holding a benefit titled "Raise the Roof," featuring three stalwarts of Brooklyn indie rock, **They Might Be Giants, Nada Surf,** and **Charles Bissell** (of the Wrens). Oct. 31: **Lez Zeppelin.** Its name would have reduced Beavis and Butt-head to hysterics, but the all-girl Zeppelin tribute band is no joke—it's long garnered critical acclaim for its polished bombast. The group's lineup changed earlier this year, and only the founder, Steph Paynes, remains from those early days of high praise.

NOKIA THEATRE TIMES SQUARE
Broadway at 44th St. (800-745-3000)—Oct. 29: Once the personification of everything the mainstream media feared about hip-hop, the West Coast rap kingpin **Snoop Dogg** is now an elder statesman of the genre. Snoop's recent efforts find him stretching out stylistically (he even tried a country tune on 2008's "Ego Trippin'"). His forthcoming album is called "Malice N Wonderland." Oct. 30: The cannabis-friendly hip-hop group **Cypress Hill.**

171 LOMBARDY STREET
171 Lombardy St., at Varick Ave., Brooklyn (No phone)—On Oct. 31, this venue, unnamed beyond its address in the industrial hinterlands of Greenpoint, features the lo-fi Brooklyn fuzz-poppers the **Vivian Girls.** Their sophomore album, "Everything Goes Wrong," suffers from the departure of the multi-instrumentalist Frankie Rose, the driving force behind the success of their first recording. A better bet would be the dreamy, haunted musings of **Crystal Stilts** (with whom Rose drummed until she started her own band, Frankie and the Outs). (For more information, visit www.toddpnyc.com.)

(LE) POISSON ROUGE
158 Bleecker St. (212-505-3474)—Nov. 4: The dancy-happy outfit **Buraka Som Sistema.**

"PURGATORIO"
Simon Hammerstein and Randy Weiner, the impresarios behind the Box, the notorious little downtown club, bring the action uptown for a few weeks with a new venture, in the former China Club space, which should have room aplenty for their wild imaginations. Spread out over three floors and fifteen thousand square feet, the theatrical, interactive Halloween installation can be expected to have at least a touch of the outrageously edgy vibe that has made the Box so popular. (268 W. 47th St. Through Oct. 31. For more information, visit www.enterpurgatorio.com, or call 212-352-3101.)

RODEO BAR
375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (212-683-6500)—Sundays in November, except on the 15th: The **Chandler Travis Philharmonic.** The irreverent guitarist, singer, and composer Travis, who lives on Cape Cod and has been known to perform barefoot and in his pajamas, swings by with a slightly scaled-down version of his big band. For years, beginning in the seventies, Travis co-led the musical act that opened for George Carlin on his tours. His other band, the Incredible Casuals, got its start in the eighties and is a fixture on the New England music scene. Expect long nights of playful original songs that mix mind-bending wordplay with Dixieland jazz, shimmering rock, and horn-fuelled R. & B.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Oct. 30: The soul-music party Dig Deeper, which specializes in finding old stars and coaxing them back onstage, throws its last get-together of 2009 (its hosts are taking a break, but the series is expected to return in January). It's bringing in the four surviving original members of the **Green Berets,** the elusive Chicago vocal group whose members recorded under three additional names—Walter & the Admeration's, the High Society, and the Velvet Hammer—from the mid-sixties to the late seventies. Their original 45s are so rare that some now go for up to five thousand dollars apiece. This is the first time they'll be playing New York City, and the first time they're getting together in some twenty years. With the **Sweet Divines** and the **Divine Soul Rhythm Band.** (For more information, visit www.myspace.com/digdeepernyc.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Alessandra Belloni and **John La Barbera** and their troupe **I Giullari di Piazza** ("The Jesters of the Court") specialize in trance dances, musical exorcisms, and haunting love songs from Southern Italy. They are joined here by the noted Neapolitan folksinger **Nando Citarella.** (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 212-545-7536. Oct. 30.)

ZEBULON
258 Wythe Ave., Brooklyn (718-218-6934)—Oct. 30: Seattle's experimental garage outfit **Curious Mystery** leads a psychedelic journey into the country junk yard. Though heavy on the electric guitar, the band's meandering instrumentals are enlivened with occasional gong, banjo, and autoharp.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Starting Oct. 27: A visit from the swinging San Francisco-based singer **Paula West.**

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Oct. 27-31: Some forty years after first gaining attention with such Hammond organ masters as Richard (Groove) Holmes, the guitarist **Pat Martino** revisits his roots with a quartet featuring the tenor saxophonist **Eric Alexander,** the drummer **Jeff (Tain) Watts,** and the keyboardist **Tony Monaco.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Oct. 27-Nov. 1: The threesome of the leader and bassist **Ron Carter,** the pianist **Mulgrew Miller,** and the guitarist **Russell Malone** approaches the finely measured elegance of the late lamented Modern Jazz Quartet. With the drummer **Francisco Mela** and his trio.

CAFÉ CARLYLE
Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—Through Nov. 7: The cabaret-jazz vocalist **Jessica Molaskey** and her guitarist husband, **John Pizzarelli,** deliver classic and contemporary tunes with aplomb. They have a graceful charm and heaps of musical expertise.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Oct. 27-Nov. 1: Illinois Jacquet, a swing-era tenor saxophonist whose barely controlled exuberance often disguised a sophistication that was finally given free reign in the years before his death, in 2004, is fêted by the Russian-born saxophonist **Igor Butman,** a favorite of Bill Clinton.

FEINSTEIN'S AT LOEWS REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Oct. 29-31 and Nov. 5-7: The charming singer and raconteur **Mary Cleere Haran** presents a Johnny Mercer tribute.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Oct. 28: The under-the-radar guitar hero **Duke Robillard** displays an enviable facility with blues, jazz, rockabilly, and points between, a gift that stood him well as a member of Roomful of Blues and the Fabulous Thunderbirds. Oct. 29-Nov. 1: The clarinet whiz **Eddie Daniels** meets up with the keyboardist **Bob James**, a smooth-jazz deity who, one hopes, will display his more substantial gifts.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Oct. 29-31, in the Rose Theatre: Leading a combined unit of both the **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra** and his own quintet, the trumpeter **Wynton Marsalis** showcases his original compositions. Oct. 30-31, in the Allen Room: The top-shelf jazz singer **Dianne Reeves**, whose deep, inventive interpretations, whether drawn from jazz or pop sources, reflect a hard-won struggle to find and secure an artistic identity of her own. (Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Oct. 29: The bassist **Ben Williams**, who just won the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition, leads his own band, Sound Effect, featuring the saxophonist **Jaleel Shaw** and the pianist **Gerald Clayton.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Oct. 28: The assured singer **Pamela Luss** collaborated with the saxophonist **Houston Person** for her new record, "Sweet and Saxy." Oct. 29-Nov. 1: **Go Home** unites the clarinettist **Ben Goldberg** with the guitarist **Charlie Hunter**, the trombonist **Curtis Fowlkes**, and the drummer **Scott Amendola** in a searching ensemble that welcomes lyrical improvisation while embracing the groove.

MAX D. RAISKIN CENTER
Community Synagogue, 325 E. 6th St. (212-473-3665)—Oct. 31: **Greg Wall,** the saxophonist, composer, and leader of such bands as **Later Prophets**, the **Unity Orchestra**, and **Klezmerfest**, is also a rabbi. To celebrate his fiftieth birthday, as well as his new position as rabbi of the Sixth Street Community Synagogue, in the East Village, Wall will perform with the aforementioned groups and be joined by members of the **Hasidic New Wave** ensemble, the guitarist **Gary Lucas**, and others.

SMALLS
183 W. 10th St. (212-252-5091)—Oct. 29: The pianist **Joan Stiles** performs duets with the saxophonist **Steve Wilson.** Later that night, the dual-tenor-saxophone quintet of **Bob Mover** and **Grant Stewart** takes over.

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—Oct. 30-31: As on his latest album, "Live at Smoke," the pianist **David Berkman** fronts a sharp quartet. Here the rhythm section is the same as it is on the release—the bassist **Ed Howard** and the drummer **Ted Poor**—and the saxophonist is **Antonio Hart.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Oct. 27-Nov. 1: The trumpeter **Tom Harrell's** long-running quintet provides a showcase for his full-blooded post-bop playing and his spirited interplay with the saxophonist **Wayne Escoffery.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ZANKEL HALL
Seventh Ave. at 57th St. (212-247-7800)—Oct. 28: **Terence Blanchard** opens Carnegie Hall's 2009-2010 "Shape of Jazz" series. The trumpeter Blanchard doesn't think small, a possible consequence of working as the composer of choice for the filmmaker Spike Lee. On his recent release, the politically charged "Choices," Blanchard incorporated Cornel West's recorded observations into a mix of original material by members of his own responsive small group.

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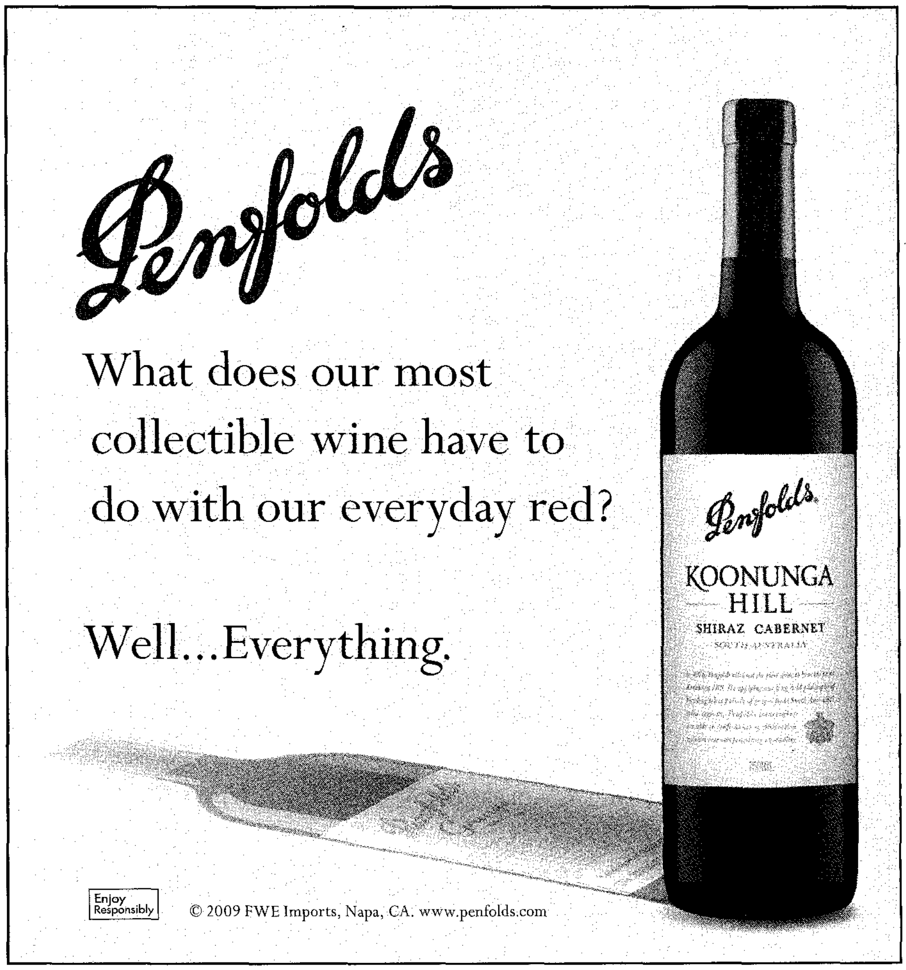
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ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Vermeer's Masterpiece 'The Milkmaid'"** sets an example for recession-era museum practice. The single guest diva, from the Rijksmuseum, in Amsterdam, heads a cast of local talent: the Met's five Vermeers (including the later, peerless "Young Woman with Water Pitcher") and related works from the Dutch Golden Age. A husky young servant pours milk. The colors are sensational, the light effects miraculous. The curator, Walter Liedtke, proposes a sexy subtext: milkmaids were notoriously promiscuous. But the picture's quiet majesty hardly countenances aphrodisia. Vermeer suffused ordinary humanity with a conviction of the sacred. Through Nov. 29. ♦ **"Art of the Samurai: Japanese Arms and Armor, 1156-1868."** Through Jan. 10. ♦ **"Looking In: Robert Frank's 'The Americans.'"** Through Jan. 3. ♦ **"American Stories: Paintings of Everyday Life, 1765-1915."** Through Jan. 24. ♦ **"Watteau, Music, and Theater."** Through Nov. 29. ♦ **"Pablo Bronstein."** Through Feb. 21. ♦ **"Eccentric Visions: The World of Luo Ping (1733-1799)."** Through Jan. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Monet's Water Lilies."** MOMA has reinstalled Monet's "Water Lilies," a nearly forty-two-foot-long triptych, along with related paintings, in a room of its wondrous own, with a couch. Bring a snorkel. Dry paint never made for wetter effects than in the engulfing expositions of the Giverny ponds and gardens, which filled the artist's last years, as he adjusted to the handicap of cataracts. (He died in 1926.) Get as close as you like to the nubbly surfaces of the triptych, with its candid brushstrokes that skitter and clot; your gaze will stay drenched in an aqueous sublime. Pinkish summer clouds aren't so much reflected as drowned in turquoise, violet, and mud-green depths. The tone of the second-biggest single-panel panorama is a soprano, silvery shimmer, suggesting not so much water as polychrome steam. Through April 12. ♦ **"Paul Sietsema."** Leaner and more austere than those in the artist's show at the Whitney in 2003, which included a fantastically voyeuristic dollhouse-size model of the art critic Clement Greenberg's living room, the works here draw their inspiration from archeology. The meditative black-and-white 16-mm. projection "Figure 3" features flickers of primary color—a nod to structuralist film—and documents "artifacts" created in Sietsema's studio. Related ink drawings could be mistaken for rubbings, old photographs, or newspapers. An enlarged, meticulously re-created version of the *Times* review of Sietsema's Whitney show could be termed auto-archeological—or just self-obsessed. Through Feb. 15. ♦ **"New Photography 2009: Walead Beshty, Daniel Gordon, Leslie Hewitt, Carter Mull, Sterling Ruby, Sara VanDerBeek."** Through Jan. 11. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Kandinsky."** It's a kind of apotheosis to see this retrospective in the Guggenheim, whose founding collection centered on this titanic artist, and whose architecture ratified his spirit of shoot-the-works modernity. Not for the first time, but with extra verve, the spiral ramp acts as a time machine, whirling us back to years when it seemed that paint on a brush could change the world. Best are the ferocious pictures from 1909 to 1914, in which Kandinsky invented and road-tested abstract art. The tidied-up modernistic ciphers and graphic doodads of his later work remain a harder sell, but the scope and scale of his ambition, even there, awe. He was really something. Through Jan. 13. ♦ **"Anish Kapoor: Memory."** Through March 28. ♦ **"Gabriele Münter and Vasily Kandinsky, 1902-14: A Life in Photographs."** Through Jan. 13. ♦ **"Intervals: Kitty Kraus."** Through Jan. 6. ♦ **"Paired, Gold: Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Roni Horn."** Through Jan. 6. (Open Fridays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Saturday evenings until 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—**"Georgia O'Keeffe: Abstraction."** Through Jan. 17. ♦ **"Steve Wolfe on Paper."** Wolfe throws down the gauntlet to the Kindle and the iPod, in painstaking re-creations of book and record covers. They're a triumph of trompe-l'oeil craftsmanship, accurate, down to their grooves, scratches, and crease marks—not to mention a great syllabus (Francis Steegmuller's biography of Jean Cocteau, Wittgenstein's "Remarks on Color," Kerouac's "On the Road") and playlist ("The Velvet Underground & Nico," Gertrude Stein reading from "The Making of Americans"). But all the painstaking verisimilitude—the faux objets trouvés—verges on hidebound. Younger artists like Carol Bove achieve similar results—connecting avant-culture dots—using flea-market finds. Through Nov. 29. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"James Tissot: 'The Life of Christ.'"** Through Jan. 17. ♦ **"From the Village to Vogue: The Modernist Jewelry of Art Smith."** Through March 14. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Extreme Mammals: The Biggest, Smallest, and Most Amazing Mammals of All Time."** Through Jan. 3. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—**"Thomas Chambers (1808-1869): American Marine and Landscape Painter."** The son of a sailor and the younger brother of another marine painter, Chambers took up the trade and became an idiosyncratic master of the genre, painting primarily from prints rather than from plein-air sketches. Scenes from recent disasters and wars pleased his clients: "Capture of H.B.M. Frigate 'Macedonian' by U.S. Frigate 'United States,' October 25, 1812" (c. 1852-53) and the tabloid-grabbing "Rockaway Beach, New York, with the Wreck of the Ship 'Bristol'" (c. 1837-40) are painted with his characteristic bright skies and animated clouds and whitecaps. Near the museum's entrance, Chambers's "View of Cold Spring and Mount Taurus from Fort Putnam" (c. 1843-57) is hung alongside Thomas Cole's "View of Fort Putnam" (1825), offering insights into the difference—or lack thereof—between so-called "folk" and insider. Through March 7. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 7:30.)

ASIA SOCIETY

Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Hanging Fire: Contemporary Art from Pakistan."** Through Jan. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS

1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—**"Intersections: The Grand Concourse Commissions."** Opens Nov. 1. ♦ **"Katie Holten."** Through Jan. 3. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Design USA: Contemporary Innovation."** Through April 4. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

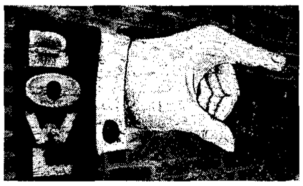
DIA AT THE HISPANIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Audubon Terrace, Broadway at 155th St. (212-926-2234)—**"Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster: Chronotopes & Dioramas."** Through April 18. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 4:30, and Sundays, 1 to 4.)

THE DRAWING CENTER

35 Wooster St. (212-219-2166)—**"Ree Morton: At the Still Point of the Turning World."** Morton, a former nursing student, a Navy housewife,

TABLES FOR TWO
BROOKLYN BOWL



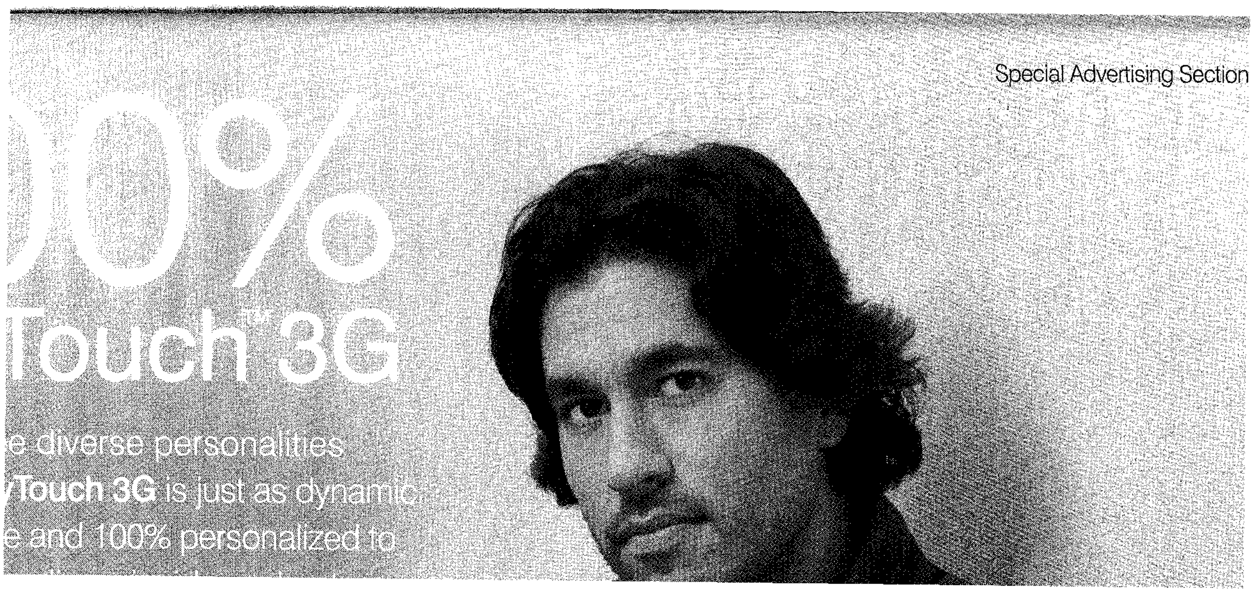
HONORE BROWN

61 Wythe Ave., Brooklyn (718-963-3369)—"We suggest that you eat with your non-bowling hand," a note on the menu at Brooklyn Bowl states, in a nod, presumably, to both aim and hygiene, if not to the traditional carelessness of ten-frame dining. This converted warehouse at the northern edge of Williamsburg does triple duty as a bowling alley, a music hall, and a grub house. Its kingpin, Peter Shapiro, the former owner of the bygone jam-bandy club Wetlands, has dreamed up an emporium that combines hedonistic excess (deep-end leather couches, spiked milkshakes, brisket, live music) with eco-consciousness (reclaimed-cork floors, no bottled beer, live music). For the eats, he brought in the Bromberg brothers, the creators of Blue Ribbon, to draw up a rebuke to every limpid water dog and fossilized onion ring you've ever downed, then regretted, at Wherever Lanes. They tinkered with comfort-food classics, secure in the knowledge that no bowler will ever crave endive. It's a menu that begs over-ordering, as well as this remark from your waiter, regarding the procedure for delivering the food: "You guys want it as it fits?" "Fits where?" is one reply; the table is bigger than the stomach.

Still, all you have to do, while stuffed, is take a few steps forward and drop a twelve-pound ball on the floor, so there's no sin in downing the carefully considered greaseballs the Blue Ribbon boys sling your way. Their fried chicken, dipped in matzoh batter, seasoned with Cajun spices, and accompanied by white bread and honey, has Earl Anthony game. The calamari, commingled with fried jalapeño, is the Dick Weber of fried squid. The San Gennaro, loaded with finely ground Italian sausage, is the Johnny Petraglia of French-bread pizzas: crisp outside, fluffy inside, it has all of the virtue, and none of the vice, of Stouffer's. There are a few gutter balls; some might find the mac and cheese too creamy and the "Really" Sloppy Joe really actually too sweet. But the score sheet shows more X's than —'s.

On a recent evening, the lanes were busy but not loud; the pins hang on strings, which helps muffle the din. Giant video screens showed montages from raunchy old B-movies like "The Student Nurses" and "Caged Heat." Around eleven, the Roots took the stage, the dance floor filled up, and a waiter came by with Nutella-bourbon shakes, a convergence that felt like nailing a spare on a four-ten split. (Open weekdays for dinner and weekends for lunch and dinner. Entrées $9-$19.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*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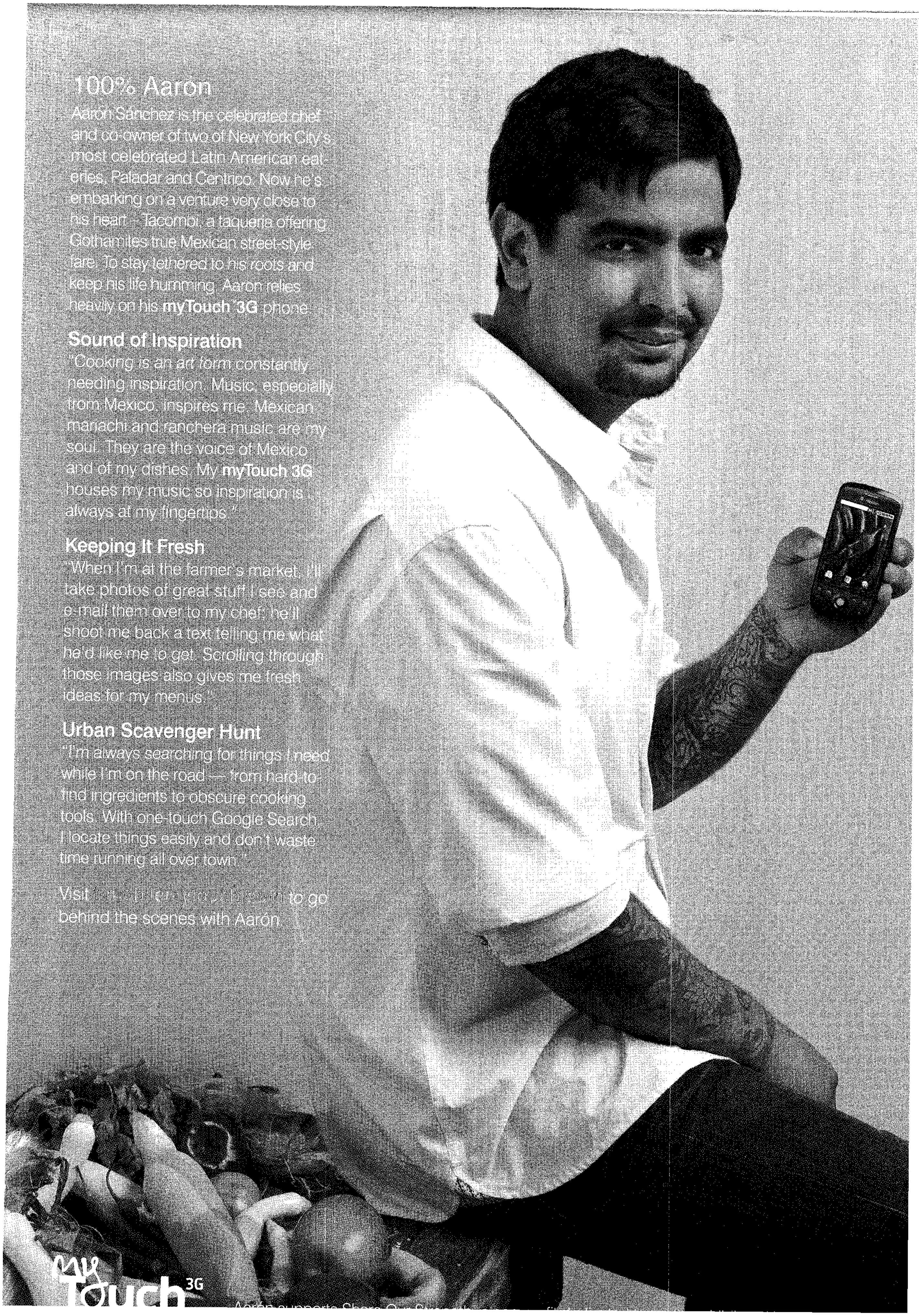


100% Aarón

Aarón Sánchez is the celebrated chef and co-owner of two of New York City's most celebrated Latin American eateries, Paladar and Centrico. Now he's embarking on a venture very close to his heart – Tacombi, a taqueria offering Gothamites true Mexican street-style fare. To stay tethered to his roots and keep his life humming, Aaron relies heavily on his **myTouch 3G** phone.

Sound of Inspiration

"Cooking is an *art form* constantly needing inspiration. Music, especially from Mexico, inspires me. Mexican mariachi and ranchera music are my soul. They are the voice of Mexico and of my dishes. My **myTouch 3G** houses my music so inspiration is always at my fingertips."

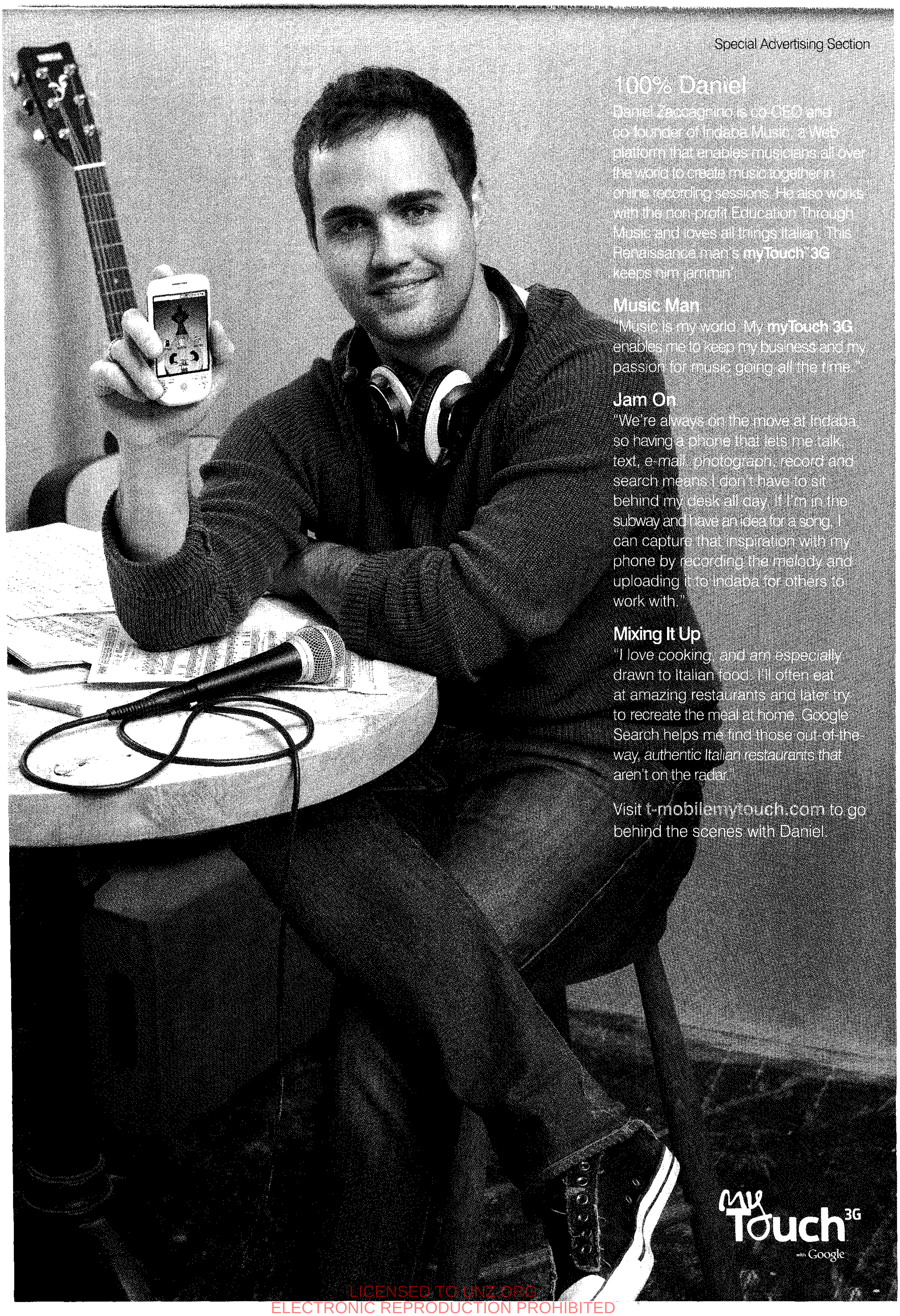
Keeping It Fresh

"When I'm at the farmer's market, I'll take photos of great stuff I see and e-mail them over to my chef; he'll shoot me back a text telling me what *he'd like me to get. Scrolling through* those images also gives me fresh ideas for my menus."

Urban Scavenger Hunt

"I'm always searching for things I need while I'm on the road — from hard-to-find ingredients to obscure cooking tools. With one-touch Google Search, I locate things easily and don't waste time running all over town."

Visit [illegible] to go behind the scenes with Aarón.



100% Daniel

Daniel Zaccagnino is co-CEO and co-founder of Indaba Music, a Web platform that enables musicians all over the world to create music together in online recording sessions. He also works with the non-profit Education Through Music and loves all things Italian. This Renaissance man's **myTouch® 3G** keeps him jammin'.

Music Man

"Music is my world. My **myTouch 3G** enables me to keep my business and my passion for music going all the time."

Jam On

"We're always on the move at Indaba, so having a phone that lets me talk, text, e-mail, photograph, record and search means I don't have to sit behind my desk all day. If I'm in the subway and have an idea for a song, I can capture that inspiration with my phone by recording the melody and uploading it to Indaba for others to work with."

Mixing It Up

"I love cooking, and am especially drawn to Italian food. I'll often eat at amazing restaurants and later try to recreate the meal at home. Google Search helps me find those out-of-the-way, authentic Italian restaurants that aren't on the radar."

Visit **t-mobilemytouch.com** to go behind the scenes with Daniel.

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
CROSSING OVER

Avant-garde music, which once filled downtown alleys with noises strange and sweet, has been all but banished from Manhattan, a victim of rising rents and civic indifference. It is, however, flourishing on certain handsomely decrepit streets in Brooklyn.

RICCARDO VECCHIO

The photographer and gallerist Suzanne Fiol, who in 2003 founded the music space Issue Project Room, was more responsible than anyone for the transplantation of New York's experimental tradition. Fiol died of cancer on October 5th, at the age of forty-nine, and news of her passing elicited many mournful tributes on the Internet. She not only supported artists with every means at her disposal but also created a welcoming community, less sullenly clubbish than avant-garde haunts of yore. Cagean conceptualists rubbed shoulders with free-jazz virtuosos, indie-rock sound terrorists, and diehard modernists. Fortunately, Issue Project Room's future seems secure, with the Borough of Brooklyn helping the venue to renovate a new home in a former Elks Club on Livingston Street. The noise goes on.

—*Alex Ross*

and the mother of three, died in a car crash in 1977, just ten years into a promising art career. A rousing show at the Drawing Center rescues her from obscurity in the shadows of unsmiling higher powers: post-minimalism, which she embraced and advanced with heretical insouciance, and feminism, which freed her without politicizing her temperament. The buoyantly inventive works here range from tiny, humble scrap-lumber reliefs, marked with felt-tip pens, to the exuberant "Devil Chaser," a sprawl of colorfully festooned wire, its title spelled out in wooden block letters on the floor. Morton tackled recondite aesthetic ideas without fear or affectation. Through Dec. 18. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Exuberant Grotesques: Renaissance Maiolica from the Fontana Workshop."** Through Jan. 17. ♦ **"Watteau to Degas: French Drawings from the Frits Lugt Collection."** Through Jan. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Dress Codes: The Third ICP Triennial of Photography and Video."** Through Jan. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

JAPAN SOCIETY
333 E. 47th St. (212-752-3015)—**"Serizawa: Master of Japanese Textile Design."** Through Jan. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 11 to 6, Fridays, 11 to 9, and weekends, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Reinventing Ritual: Contemporary Art and Design for Jewish Life."** Through Feb. 7. ♦ **"Rite Now: Sacred and Secular in Video."** Through Feb. 7. (Open Thursdays, and Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Fridays, 11 to 4.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"William Blake's World: 'A New Heaven Is Begun.'"** Through Jan. 3. ♦ **"Celebrating Puccini."** Through Jan. 10. ♦ **"Rococo and Revolution: Eighteenth-Century French Drawings."** Before the revolution, the party. The show opens with the artists of the ancien régime. There's Watteau, represented by a lovely crayon study of a little girl, and four cherub heads by Madame de Pompadour's favorite artist, François Boucher, in chalk on gray paper. Note the fabulous sketches in the margins of sales catalogues by Gabriel-Jacques Saint-Aubin, who gave up painting after losing the Prix de Rome to Fragonard in 1752, and turned instead to recording the goings on at Paris's auctions and salons. Portraying the onset of revolution—truthfully, the skimpiest part of the show—are two drawings by David, studies for "The Oath of the Tennis Court" and "The Execution of the Sons of Brutus" (both made in 1789), which showcase his spare and muscular line. Through Jan. 3. ♦ **"Where the Wild Things Are: Original Drawings by Maurice Sendak."** Through Nov. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—**"Voces y Visiones: Four Decades Through El Museo del Barrio's Permanent Collection."** Through Feb. 28. ♦ **"Nexus New York: Latin/American Artists in the Modern Metropolis."** Through Feb. 28. (Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

MUSEUM OF ARTS & DESIGN
2 Columbus Circle (212-299-7777)—**"Slash: Paper Under the Knife."** Through April 4. ♦ **"Ghost Stories: New Design from Nendo."** Through Jan. 10. ♦ **"Read My Pins: The Madeleine Albright Collection."** Through Jan. 31. (Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6; and Thursday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF COMIC AND CARTOON ART
594 Broadway, at Houston St. (212-254-3511)—**"Sounds and Pauses: The Comics of Dave Mazzucchelli."** Mazzucchelli's recently released book

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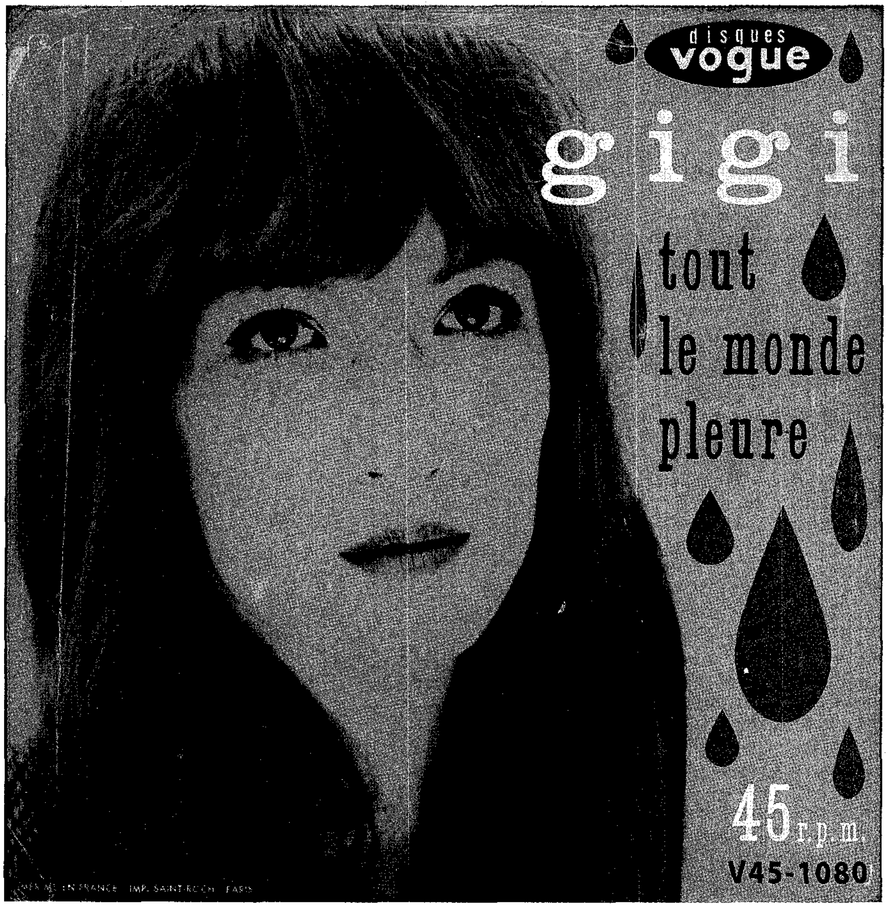


"Tout le Monde Pleure, September 1962" (2009), by Josh Gosfield, at Kasher.

"Asterios Polyp" follows the eponymous architect through a "journey of self-awareness" that includes erotic encounters, boring faculty parties, and a meeting with a composer who describes his life style as "bohegeois": not quite bohemian, not quite bourgeois. What the drawings here offer, particularly the rougher studies, are fascinating insights into how much effort the artist exerts in developing even the most marginal characters. Through Nov. 1. ♦ **"Peter Kuper: Diario de Oaxaca."** Best known for his work on the "Spy vs. Spy" series in *MAD* magazine, Kuper shows drawings from the sketchbook he kept during a two-year stint in Oaxaca. His attempt to escape the last years of the Bush Administration led him to relocate to a town that turned out to be under martial law, in an area plagued by riptides, eco-tourists, and stray dogs, all faithfully—and hilariously—documented here. Through Nov. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"Legacy: The Preservation of Wilderness in New York City, Photographs by Joel Meyerowitz."** Through March 7. ♦ **"The Edge of New York: Waterfront Photographs."** Through Nov. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—**"Urs Fischer: Marguerite de Ponty."** Opens Oct. 28. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"Lincoln and New York."** Through March 25. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Between Spaces."** Through April 5. ♦ **"1969."** Through April 5. ♦ **"100 Years (Version #2, P.S. 1, Nov. 2009)."** Opens Nov. 1. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

SCULPTURECENTER
44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—**"A Voyage of Growth and Discovery: Mike Kelley and Michael Smith."** Meet Baby Ikki, the alter ego of Michael Smith, a New York performance artist who first wobbled out the pre-verbal, diaper-clad character in 1975. He's Swee'Pea as scripted by Albert Camus, an infantile avatar of alienation. In 2008, Smith teamed up with the Los Angeles art star Mike Kelley (a master of abject grotesquerie) to set Baby loose in the Nevada desert, amid the dreadlocked trustafarians and body-painting ravers who descend every summer for Burning Man. Video documentation of Ikki's odyssey is the heart of "A Voyage of Growth and Discovery," running on six giant screens that ring the dark gallery, converted, by Kelley, into a fever dream of a playground. A geodesic jungle gym is lined with plush toys; a totem pole of stuffed animals rises from vertical monkey bars. Through Dec. 30. ♦ **"In Practice Fall 2009."** Through Nov. 29. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

MARCELLO GEPPETTI / WEEGEE
This exhibition of celebrity portraits from the golden age of the candid camera—from Marilyn Monroe to Brigitte Bardot—is primarily a showcase for one of Italy's first and most audacious paparazzi. Weegee holds his own with pictures that, no matter how spontaneous, never looked tossed off. His shots of Hedda Hopper, Fiorello LaGuardia, James Dean, and Ann Sheridan are witty, opinionated, and occasionally rude. Perhaps because his angle is gossip rather than news, Geppetti's work is looser and lighter, with a nice comic zing. His pictures of Bardot out shopping, Nureyev dancing with Talitha Getty, and Jackie and Aristotle Onassis in the back of a limo are the models for every tabloid stalker shot since. Through Nov. 14. (De Lellis, 1045 Madison Ave., at 80th St. 212-327-1482.)

Short List

DUBUFFET / MIRÓ: Mathes, 22 E. 80th St. 212-570-4190. Opens Oct. 29. **DAVID HOCKNEY:** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292. Through Dec. 24. **SALLY MANN / CY TWOMBLY:** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313. Through Oct. 31. **"MEDIEVAL ART AND THE CONTEMPORARY SPIRIT":** Feigen, 34 E. 69th St. 212-628-0700. Opens Oct. 29.

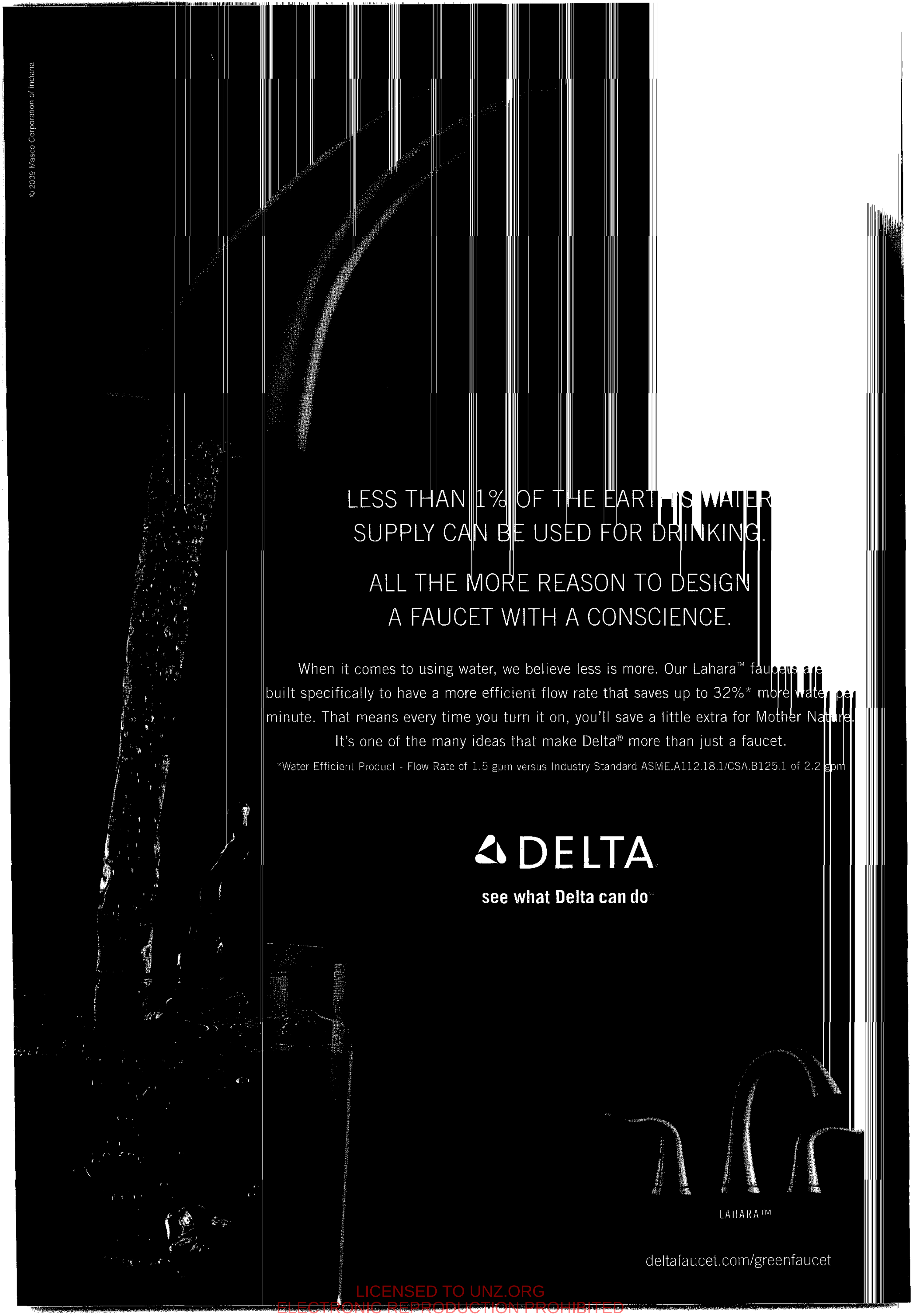
GALLERIES—CHELSEA

EDWARD BURTYNSKY
The portentousness and inflated size of Burtynsky's photographs can be off-putting, but his color prints are frequently beautiful, and an artist's willingness to tackle big subjects can't be taken for granted these days. His main theme here—the global impact of oil—yields a broad range of landscape images, and the work's grand scale never feels unearned. Elevated, classically omniscient scenes of oil fields and refineries, new-car lots, and a Los Angeles freeway interchange are astonishingly detailed and absorbing. A newer series of aerial views of mining operations in Australia turn the gouged earth, almost unrecognizable as actual landscape, into vigorous abstractions. Through Nov. 26. (Hasted Hunt Kraeutler, 537 W. 24th St. 212-627-0006.)

"ONE MINUTE MORE"
The fleeting nature of performance art is complicated by documents that freeze it for posterity or by props and sets that suggest ongoing reënactments. The most straightforward (and static) pieces here are Clifford Owens's photographs of people posing together in a gallery on the Lower East Side. More engaging are Kate Gilmore's video of herself smashing through a structure (the remnants rest nearby) and Aki Sasamoto's enigmatic sculptural installation. At seventeen minutes, Oliver Lutz's video "The Behavioral Subject (A Mental Model)" demands the biggest time commitment, but the investment pays off as the artist transforms himself into a series of characters in wacko getups. The subtle showstopper is Jamie Isenstein's eerily simple tableau of a white curtain with feet—the artist's own—peeking out from the bottom. Through Oct. 31. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11.)

Short List

ANDREA BOWERS: Kreps, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-741-8849. Through Dec. 5. **PAUL CHAN:** Greene Naftali, 508 W. 26th St. 212-463-7770. Through Dec. 5. **CARROLL DUNHAM:** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300. Opens Oct. 30. **NICOLE EISENMAN:** Koenig, 545 W. 23rd St. 212-334-9255. Opens Oct. 30. **SPENCER FINCH:** Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 212-727-3323. Through Nov. 28. **PETER FISCHLI & DAVID WEISS:** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St., 526 W. 22nd St., 523 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200. Opens Oct. 30. **JOSH GOSFIELD:** Kasher, 521 W. 23rd St. 212-966-3978. Through Nov. 25. **DAVID HOCKNEY:** Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000. Opens Oct. 29. **EMILY JACIR:** Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave. at 18th St. 212-367-7474. Opens Oct. 28. **MICHAEL JOO:** Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663. Through Dec. 5. **SISTER CORITA KENT:** Feuer, 530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700. Through Dec. 5. **MARK MANDERS:** Bonakdar, 521 W. 21st St. 212-414-4144. Opens Oct. 30. **SARAH MORRIS:** Petzel, 537 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through Nov. 21. **MATTHEW RITCHIE:** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000. Through Dec. 5. **STERLING RUBY:** Foxy Productions, 617 W. 27th St. 212-239-2758.



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Through Nov. 21. **RICHARD SERRA:** Gagosian, 522 W. 21st St. 212-741-1717. Through Dec. 23.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

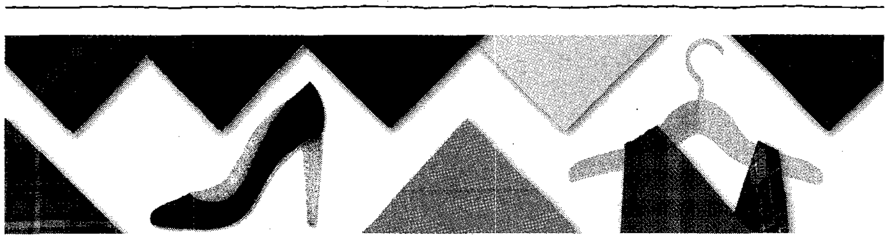
CAETANO DE ALMEIDA
A mid-career painter from Brazil makes his New York solo début with a striking show of loosely geometric canvases, filled with patterns derived from sources as varied as color theory and the fabrics of women's clothes in Bahia. Saturation is a concern, both formally (the colors are eye-popping) and conceptually: a checklist cites the material of the show's lone grisaille work, "Rara Estampa—Excêntrico," as "pollution." To create the piece, de Almeida put a new twist on plein-air painting, exposing his canvas to the atmosphere in São Paolo. Through Nov. 15. (Eleven Rivington, 11 Rivington St. 212-982-1930.)

CEDRIC GERBEHAYE
This Belgian photojournalist exhibits a group of gritty, grainy black-and-white shots made over the past three years in the volatile Democratic Republic of Congo. Thirteen untitled photographs can't begin to make sense of the chaotic civil war that has displaced much of the country's population. But Gerbehaye's images of soldiers and civilians are tough and vivid, and they communicate more than the mere facts of the matter—or than the helpful extended captions that accompany them. The image of a stadium full of women at a religious crusade suggests how faith can be drawn into conflict, and several panoramas of refugee camps hint at the vast number of disrupted lives while lingering on a movingly specific few. Through Oct. 29. (Anastasia, 166 Orchard St. 212-677-9725.)

JENNIFER NOCON
This West Village town-house gallery is a bit off the beaten path, but the calibre of its shows makes it worth the detour. The centerpiece of the latest, by the Los Angeles artist, is a sleeper of sinister beauty: a patterned frieze made of hand-dyed pieces of felt that wrap around the walls of a garden-level room as if threatening to overtake it. (The piece takes its title, "Gambusia Affinis Santa Barbara," from an aggressive species of mosquito-eating fish.) Upstairs, Nocon has attached cast-rubber carabiners to colorful strips of wool in sculptures that suggest the sporty younger cousins of Eva Hesse's post-minimalism. Through Oct. 31. (Williams, 313 W. 4th St. 212-229-2757.)

Short List

BARRY X. BALL: Salon 94 Freemans, 1 Freeman Alley. 212-529-7400. Opens Oct. 29. **BROCK ENRIGHT:** Beauchene, 21 Orchard St. 212-375-8043. Through Nov. 29. **BRENDAN FOWLER:** Rental, 120 East Broadway. 212-608-6002. Through Dec. 6. **JULIA GOLDMAN:** Museum 52, at 4 E. 2nd St. 347-789-7072. Through Nov. 14. **JUSTIN MATHERLY:** Dispatch, 127 Henry St. 212-227-2783. Through Nov. 1. **JONAS MEKAS:** Fuentes, 35 St. James Pl. 212-577-1201. Opens Oct. 28. **LAURA OWENS:** Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258. Through Nov. 21. **ERIN SHIRREFF:** Cooley, 34 Orchard St. 212-680-0564. Through Dec. 20.



SILJA GÖTZ

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE
ISAAC MIZRAHI

23 E. 67th St. (212-288-8111)—Isaac Mizrahi's brand-new shop on the Upper East Side is long and slender, like a fashion model—except, of course, not *as* slender. It is the designer's first boutique. "I never was someone who thought it was my job to have a shop," he said on a tour of the place, its concrete floors minimally appointed with a few sofas and chairs upholstered in popping orange and chartreuse, and its white lacquered walls hung with a series of colored sketches by the designer of his fall collection. "I'm good at saying 'Put that on this rack' but I'm not the type to say 'Please buy my clothes,'" he explained. This time last year, however, when, as Mizrahi put it, "the world fell apart," he visited a psychic. "'What should I do?' I asked. The psychic said, 'It's not you, it's the world. You must get a little shop. It's going to be easy.' "

The shop, designed by Mizrahi, sells his apparel, shoes, bags, jewelry, even pillows. "I love having everything in one place," he said. "Before, you had to go to Jeffrey for the shoes, maybe Bergdorf for the clothes, Saudi Arabia for something else." What's here to want? Lots. For instance: the belted wrap dresses in various tartans, cut asymmetrically with fringed edges ($2,200); a tissue-thin white cashmere pullover with a chunky knit cable running down the center ($885); a mini-shift with hand-painted foil flowers sewn onto lined mesh tulle ($3,800), a pair of dangling metallic earrings—one in the form of a fish skeleton minus the tail, the other representing the missing tail ($95). "This is my favorite dress!" Mizrahi said of a nearly black moiré cocoonlike frock he calls a "parka fantasy" ($1,850). Then he eyed a knit A-line number in stripes of every color known to fabric, and said, "This is my most favorite dress because it has all my favorite colors!" ($1,250). But his absolutely most favorite pet piece is found in the curtained-off couture space, toward the back of the store. "It's like a rag sweater, but it's rag fur—I think I invented the term. It's assembled from scraps of fox, mink, sable, you name it," he said, tossing a fluffy, furry shawl over his shoulders. "Some lucky people have it in a coat" ($36,000).

—Patricia Marx

DANCE

GARTH FAGAN DANCE
For his latest visit to the Joyce, the Jamaican-born king of Rochester turns to China, or at least to the Ying Quartet recording "Dim Sum," a collection of small-plate pieces by Chinese-American composers. Fagan's response, "Mudan 175/39," serves as the centerpiece for three otherwise varied repertory programs, the second of which features two revivals: "Oatka Trail," from 1979, and "Landscape for 10," from 1988. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Oct. 27-28 at 7:30, Oct. 29-30 at 8, Oct. 31 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 1 at 2 and 7:30.)

MERCE CUNNINGHAM MEMORIAL
The dance world is still reeling from the loss of Merce Cunningham, who died this past summer, at the age of ninety, and from the news that his company will be dissolved after a two-year tour. On Oct. 28, the end of an era will be marked by a free evening-long event at the Park Avenue Armory, which will feature two performances by his almost superhuman dancers. For more information, visit www.merce.org. (Park Ave. at 66th St. 212-255-8240. Oct. 28 at 4.)

WAVE RISING SERIES
The enterprising choreographer and curator Young Soon Kim holds the fourth edition of her eclectic dance showcase. For a full schedule, visit www.whitewavedance.com. (John Ryan, 25 Jay St., Brooklyn. 718-855-8822. Oct. 28-30 at 7:30 and Oct. 31-Nov. 1 at 4 and 7:30. Through Nov. 8.)

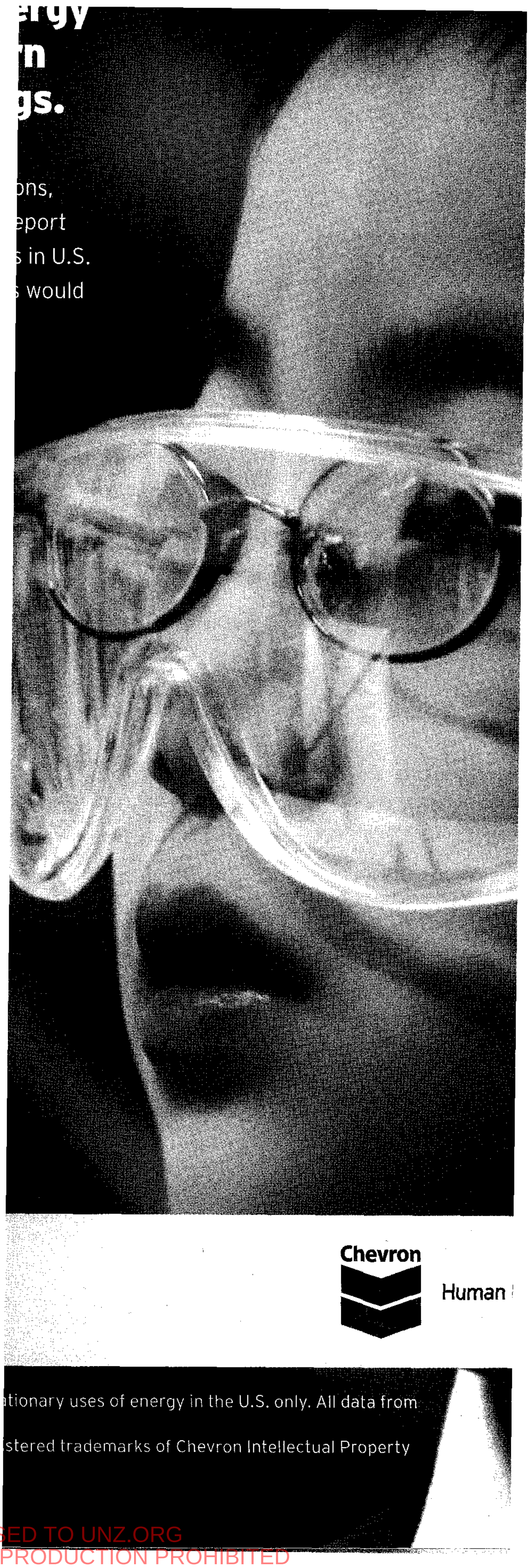
MORGAN THORSON/"HEAVEN"
A quickly rising choreographer in Minneapolis, Thorson manifests spiritual ambitions in "Heaven." (P.S. 122, First Ave. at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Oct. 28-29 at 8 and Oct. 30 at 8 and 10.)

"VISIBLE/INVISIBLE: NAKED CITY"
Urban Bush Women's Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and the choreographer Nora Chipaumire introduce "Visible/Invisible," the result of their ten-year project examining the influence of immigrants, principally African-Americans from the rural South, on the culture of American cities. "Naked City," the first installment, features dancers from Urban Bush Women, and pulls from Toni Morrison's "Jazz" and the paintings of Jacob Lawrence to celebrate and comment on life in Harlem. (Harlem Stage at the Gatehouse, 150 Convent Ave., at 135th St. 212-281-9240. Oct. 29 at 7:30.)

MORPHOSES/THE WHEELDON COMPANY
Christopher Wheeldon's company, whose weak point so far has been its selection of guest choreographers, has made a smart choice this season by offering a revival of Alexei Ratmansky's early work "Bolero" (2004). The other guests are Tim Harbour, from Australia, and the husband-and-wife team Paul Lightfoot and Sol León, resident choreographers at the Nederlands Dans Theatre. The latter's truculent duet (for two dancers and a box) "Softly As I Leave You" has, unfortunately, little to offer in the way of compelling movement. Harbour, whose work is still unknown here, has created a new piece, "Leaving Songs," set to the music of Ross Edwards, an Australian composer. Luckily, we will also get a new work by Wheeldon, "Rhapsody Fantaisie," inspired by Rachmaninoff's lush "Suites for Two Pianos," as well as last year's excellent "Commedia" and his Ligeti ballet "Continuum," from 2002. Live accompaniment will be provided by the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Americas. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Oct. 29-31 at 8 and Nov. 1 at 3.)

APHIDS/"A QUARRELING PAIR"
The second in La Mama's series of adult puppet-theatre productions is an evening of short plays inspired by Jane Bowles's 1945 experimental work "A Quarreling Pair," an intimate, Beckett-like portrait of two elderly sisters. The Melbourne-based company Aphids presents this work, performed by two simple but beautiful marionettes, grouped with two original playlets, by the Australian playwrights Lally Katz and Cynthia Troup. (74 E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Oct. 29-31 at 8 and Nov. 1 at 2:30. Through Nov. 8.)

EMMANUELLE VO-DINH
At first, the French choreographer's solo "Ici/Per.For" has the look and pacing of a yoga routine, performed under flattering light on a black-mirrored floor. Gradually, however, Vo-Dinh's silky shiftings between positions grow more continuous, unspooling like animated origami, as unbroken in their twisting flow as a Möbius strip. Zeena Parkins's live accompaniment on rubbed glass



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
BIG PICTURE

The latest installment of MOMA's annual "New Photography" exhibition is the best one in years, and not just because it's the biggest. By including six young photographers, the curator Eva Respini ups the odds that there will be interesting work on the walls, while exploring "what it means to make a photograph in the twenty-first century." For the artists here, it means pushing the medium to its breaking point and leaving conventional images behind. They make photographs about photographs—pictures that are at once painfully self-conscious and wildly experimental, brainy, and brash. Walead Beshty, Carter Mull, and Sterling Ruby favor collagelike abstractions and spectacular digital or darkroom displays. Leslie Hewitt, Daniel Gordon, and Sara VanDerBeek photograph ephemeral arrangements or constructions full of subtle personal, political, and art-historical references. Some of this stuff is way too arty, but it all looks damn good together, and it's a big step toward regaining "New Photography" 's former heft and purpose.

DANIEL GORDON

—*Vince Aletti*

and electronically distorted harp contributes a submarine atmosphere. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 866-811-4111. Oct. 29-31 at 8.)

MERCE CUNNINGHAM REPERTORY UNDERSTUDY GROUP
The RUGs, as they're commonly known, are a group of younger dancers, advanced students from the Cunningham studio, who tour with the Cunningham repertory and, in recent years, have served as the Master's laboratory for movement ideas. Two days after the Cunningham Memorial (see above), the ensemble will offer a free performance of "Cargo X" (from 1989) and a piece woven together from an assortment of Cunningham works—a mash-up known as a "MinEvent"—at the 92nd Street Y. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Oct. 30 at noon.)

I GIULLARI DI PIAZZA
The New York-based folk ensemble celebrates Halloween, or Festa dei Morti, Southern Italian style. Alessandra Belloni and her dancers present the tarantella, a dance of exorcism intended as an antidote to the hysteria said to be caused by a tarantula bite, as well as a witches' dance from the Renaissance and, on stilts, a medieval dance of death. Besides Belloni, a powerful singer and percussionist, the musicians include John La Barbera and the Neapolitan folksinger Nando Citarella. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-545-7536. Oct. 30 at 8.)

RIEDEL DANCE THEATRE
"Ukrainian Eggs: Terrible Tales of Tragedy and AlleGorey," Riedel's collection of macabre mini-melodramas inspired by Edward Gorey, gets a holiday-appropriate reprise. Carnivorous plants, a sick bird, a mysterious guest, and an unsightful nanny appear in cleverly crafted and broadly performed pieces that set up higher expectations for amusement than the small pleasures the works themselves deliver. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. Oct. 30-31 at 8 and Nov. 1 at 3.)

QI SHU FANG PEKING OPERA / "HALLOWEEN SPECTACULAR"
It may have little to do with Halloween in a literal sense—there are no pumpkins or trick-or-treaters—but the Peking Opera, whose history goes back hundreds of years, has plenty of ghouls and colorful costumes. This company, founded by the veteran star Qi Shu Fang (who was instrumental in introducing women to the art form, in the early fifties), offers vibrant, large-scale spectacles full of dance, live music, acrobatics, and martial arts, all in the service of telling traditional Chinese tales, such as the adventures of the mischievous monkey king, or the story of a thwarted lover who visits her beloved after death. In Chinese with English subtitles. (Skirball Center, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-352-3101. Oct. 31 at 7:30.)

THE HAN TANG YUEFU MUSIC AND DANCE ENSEMBLE
In "The Feast of Han Xizai," the Taiwan-based troupe draws delicate scenes out of a Tang Dynasty painting. The ensemble's attempt to reconstruct the music, dance, and fashion of that era results in a gracefully precise pantomime of court flirtations, the divertissement of long-sleeved concubines, and ritualized tea preparation, all beautifully costumed by Tim Yip (of "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" fame). Even when the title character takes out his drunken rage on a large drum, the surface of perfumed refinement is barely ruffled. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 3 at 7:30. Through Nov. 8.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Franco Zeffirelli's production of "Tosca" may be history—for now—but the Met is unlikely to tamper with his staging of **"Turandot,"** which, in its magnificent overabundance, offers a shimmering vision of ancient China that audiences love to believe in. The musical side of Puccini's final opera would seem to be in good hands, with Maria Guleghina in the title role, Marina Poplavskaya as Liù, and Marcello Giordani as Calaf; Andris Nelsons conducts. (Oct. 28, Oct. 31, and Nov. 3 at 8.) ♦ Another study in grandeur, Sonja Frisell's production of **"Aida,"** features Violeta Urmana, Dolora Zajick, Richard Margison, and Carlo Guelfi in the leading roles; Paolo Carignani. (Oct. 29 and Nov. 2 at 8.) ♦ Interactivity came to the Met last season with the première of the Robert Lepage production of **"La Damnation de Faust,"** the thrilling quasi-operatic oratorio by Berlioz: fantastical video images (which fluctuate according to the singers' movements and voices) are superimposed on a giant scaffold of a set, allowing the cast (which includes a dexterous group of acrobats) to defy the strictures of space and gravity that would normally limit the visual potential of Goethe's diabolical tale. The revival, conducted by James Conlon, features Olga Borodina, Ramón Vargas, and Ildar Abdrazakov in the leading roles. (Oct. 30 at 8.) ♦ Bartlett Sher's saucy and ebullient production of **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** with Joyce DiDonato as Rosina and with Barry Banks, Franco Vassallo, John Del Carlo, and Roberto Scandiuzzi completing the cast; Maurizio Benini. (Oct. 31 at 1.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

VERTICAL PLAYER REPERTORY: "A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE"
William Bolcom's opera, based on Arthur Miller's tragedy about a family of Red Hook longshoremen (and made in collaboration with Miller), was first seen at Chicago Lyric Opera and the Metropolitan; it now migrates, appropriately, to Brooklyn, in a new arrangement with two-piano accompaniment and with the company's director, Judith Barnes, featured in the cast. (219 Court St., Cobble Hill. 800-838-3006. Oct. 29-30 at 8 and Nov. 1 at 4.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Alan Gilbert and his orchestra, returning from an Asian tour, have decided to add a series of non-subscription concerts to their home-town schedule. The repertoire is strictly comfort food: Beethoven's "Egmont" Overture and Third Piano Concerto (with Emanuel Ax), Bernstein's Symphonic Dances from "West Side Story," and the Suite No. 2 from Falla's "The Three-Cornered Hat." (Oct. 30-31 at 8.) ♦ Gilbert, a capable violinist, will join several colleagues (and Ax) in Schumann's Piano Quintet, the first part of a Saturday-matinée concert that also features the two Beethoven works. (Oct. 31 at 2.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

"ANCIENT PATHS, MODERN VOICES"
Carnegie Hall's wide-ranging festival of Chinese music is in full stride. Oct. 28 at 8: Michael Tilson Thomas, bringing his pan-Pacific sensibility from San Francisco to New York, conducts the Juilliard Orchestra in a program featuring an excerpt from Lou Harrison's "Pacifika Rondo," the world première of "Er Huang," a concerto for piano and orchestra by Chen Qigang (with Lang Lang, no less), and Mahler's "Das Lied von der Erde" (sung by Anne Sofie von Otter and Gregory Kunde). ♦ Oct. 30 at 8: China's rich folk tradition comes to the fore in a concert by the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, an ensemble of native instruments that performs not only traditional repertory but also newly commissioned pieces (including Cheng Dazhao's "Yellow River Capriccio"). (212-247-7800. For full schedule of concerts and other events, see www.carnegiehall.org.)

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC PHILHARMONIA
David Gilbert conducts the student orchestra in Stravinsky's "Song of the Nightingale," Wagner's "Tannhäuser" Overture, and Chausson's Sym-

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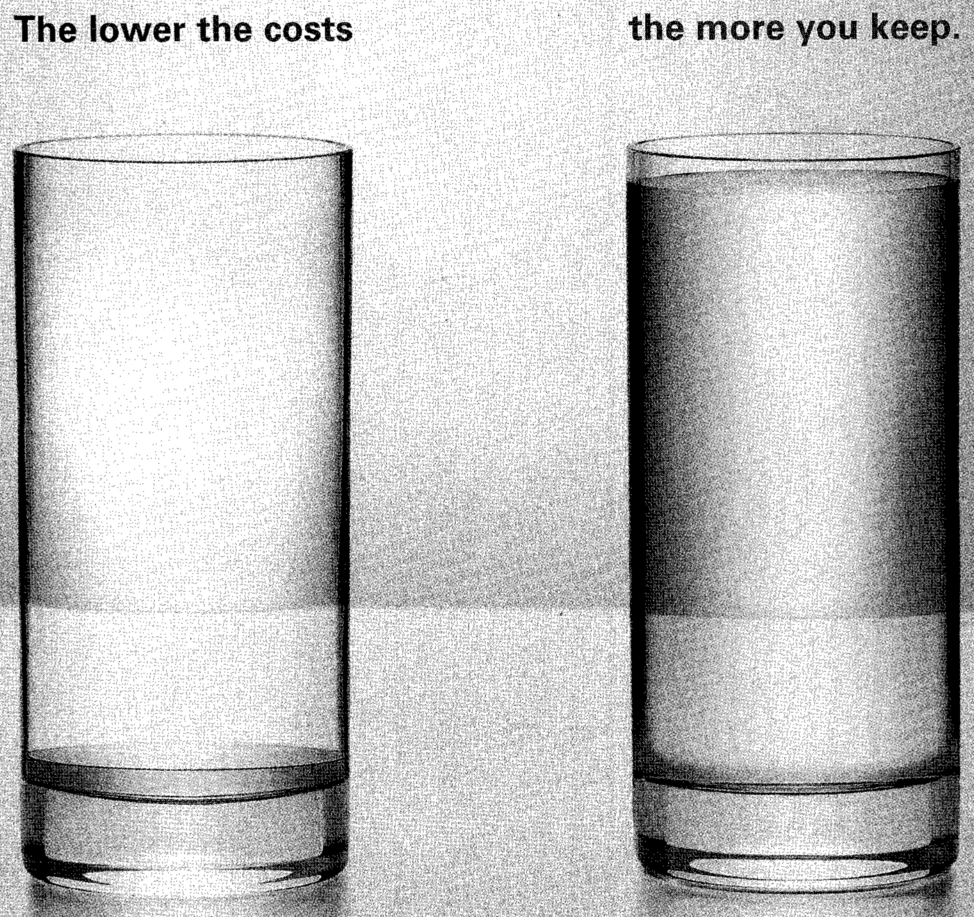

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phony in B-Flat Major. (Borden Auditorium, Broadway at 122nd St. 917-493-4428. Oct. 30 at 7:30.)

MOZARTEUM ORCHESTRA SALZBURG
Johannes Moser, one of a bumper crop of outstanding young European cellists, joins the Austrian chamber orchestra for Schumann's soulful Cello Concerto in a concert conducted by Ivor Bolton; Beethoven's "Creatures of Prometheus" Overture and Schubert's Symphony No. 9 (the "Great") complete the program. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 1 at 5.)

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
James Levine, recovering from back surgery, is scheduled to conduct the orchestra in Beethoven's Sixth ("Pastoral") and Seventh Symphonies. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 2 at 8.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: ESCHER STRING QUARTET
The acclaimed Canadian-American quartet, an ensemble of barely four years' standing, appears at Alice Tully Hall under the Society's auspices to offer a piquant Viennese program—works by Schubert (the "Quartettsatz"), Webern, and Schoenberg's brother-in-law Alexander Zemlinsky (the String Quartet No. 2, one of the great sleeper masterworks of late Romanticism). (212-875-5788. Oct. 28 at 7:30.)

KALICHSTEIN-LAREDO-ROBINSON TRIO
The eminent ensemble, longtime favorites at the 92nd Street Y, perform a classic program: the two piano trios of Franz Schubert. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Oct. 28 at 8.)

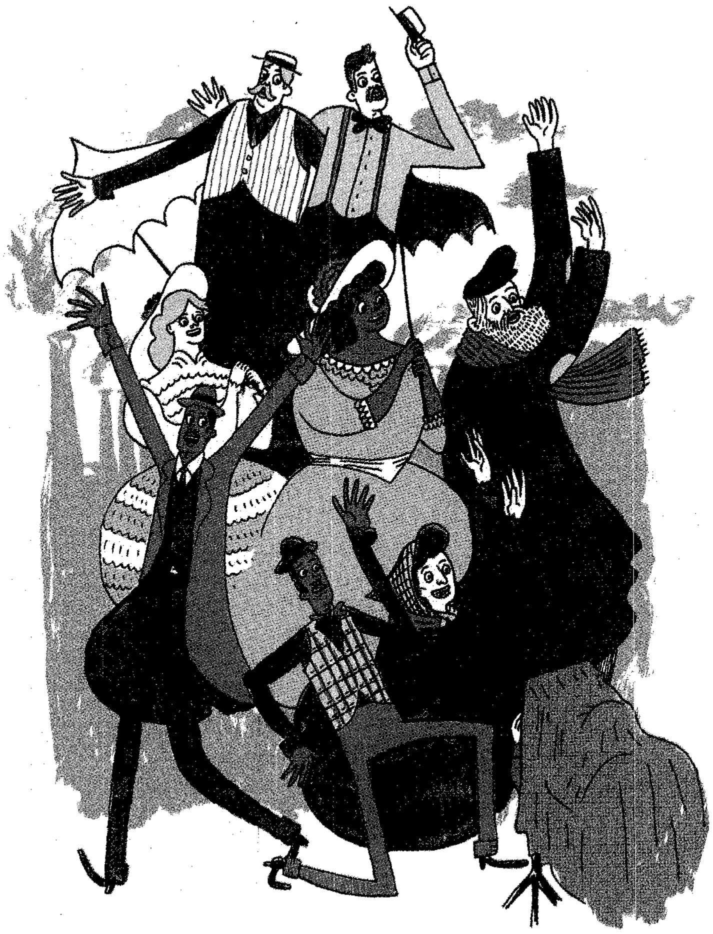
MAYA BEISER/CARTER BURWELL
The downtown cello goddess and the resourceful composer-keyboardist met at Sundance in 2008; in the midst of a collaboration, they come to (Le) Poisson Rouge to split a program. Beiser plays pieces from her electro-acoustic repertory (including Michael Gordon's "Industry" and Steve Reich's "Cello Counterpoint"), as well as new works by Jed Distler, Evan Ziporyn, and David Lang; Burwell precedes her, joining a chamber-rock combo in the première of "Blood Complex," which includes material from his scores for films by the Coen brothers. (158 Bleecker St. www.lprnyc.com. Oct. 29 at 8.)

THE STONE: NEWSPEAK
This amplified small ensemble, headed by the opera composer David T. Little and the clarinettist Eileen Mack, crosses the rock-classical boundary while maintaining a strong political bent. Its appearance at the tiny East Village space features new works by William Brittelle, Lisa Coons, and Matt Marks ("A Portrait of Glenn Beck"). (Avenue C at 2nd St. Oct. 29 at 10. Tickets at the door.)

TILL FELLNER
A pianist of probing musicianship, Fellner is in the midst of a long-term Beethoven cycle at the Metropolitan Museum. In this concert, he performs the Sonatas Nos. 4, 15 ("Pastoral"), 24, and 25. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Oct. 30 at 7.)

BARGEMUSIC
Oct. 30 at 8 and Nov. 1 at 3: The clarinettist Nuno Antunes, the cellist Adrian Daurov, and the pianist Olga Vinokur delve into the limited but distinguished repertory for their combination of instruments, performing trios by Brahms, Beethoven (in B-Flat Major, Op. 11), and Nino Rota. ♦ Oct. 31 at 8: The floating chamber-music series offers its little stage to the admired New York early-music group Artek, whose singers and players (including the harpsichordist Gwendolyn Toth) will offer music appropriate for All Hallows' Eve by Monteverdi, Gesualdo, Purcell, Eccles, and Carissimi. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

ISSUE PROJECT ROOM: NE(X)TWORKS
Suzanne Fiol has passed on, but the freewheeling Gowanus arts center she established continues her legacy. A Halloween concert, offered by the violinist Cornelius Dufallo (the ensemble's director) and the pianist Stephen Gosling, among others, features music by such estimable composers as Stockhausen ("Aus den Sieben Tagen"), Christian Wolff, and Joan La Barbara. (232 3rd St., Brooklyn. 718-330-0313. Oct. 31 at 7.)



A revival of the 1998 musical "Ragtime," at the Neil Simon.

PUNY

PEOPLE'S SYMPHONY CONCERTS: JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET
The legendary ensemble—now with its new first violinist, Nick Eanet, firmly in place—appears in the low-priced series' latest concert at Washington Irving High School, performing quartets by Schubert (in A Minor, "Rosamunde"), Bartók, and Beethoven (in F Major, Op. 135). (Irving Pl. at 16th St. 212-586-4680. Oct. 31 at 8.)

(LE) POISSON ROUGE: INNA FALIKS/ALESSIO BAX
Can the Fish do no wrong? The art of the piano recital thrives at the downtown music club. Nov. 2 at 7:30: Alessio Bax, born in Bari but now a New Yorker (with an Avery Fisher Career Grant under his belt), offers a diverse program of Bach transcriptions (including Busoni's transformation of the Chaconne for Solo Violin). ♦ Nov. 2 at 10: Late night belongs to the acclaimed Ukrainian pianist Inna Faliks, whose performances of works by Schoenberg, Schumann (the Fantasy in C Major), Fred Hersch, and others will be interspersed with readings by the poet Jesse Ball. (158 Bleecker St. www.lprnyc.com.)

"ANCIENT PATHS, MODERN VOICES": WU MAN AND THE KRONOS QUARTET
The radiant pi-pa player, an old colleague of the intrepid ensemble, joins it to perform one of its signature pieces, Tan Dun's "Ghost Opera"; "A Chinese Home," a new theatrical work with video accompaniment, completes the program. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 3 at 7:30. For full schedule of concerts and other events, see www.carnegiehall.org.)

AMERICAN MODERN ENSEMBLE: "M & M'S"
Free handfuls of the eponymous candy (as well as a cash bar) can be enjoyed along with music by Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Ben Johnston, and Ingram Marshall ("Holy Ghosts") in a performance at Dumbo's Galapagos Art Space that celebrates two innovations of American music, microtones and minimalism. (16 Main St., Brooklyn. 718-222-8500. Nov. 3 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

GENTLEMEN BRONCOS
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Oct. 30. (In wide release.)

THE HOUSE OF THE DEVIL
A horror film about a babysitter who is lured into a satanic plot. Directed by Ti West; starring Jocelin Donahue, A. J. Bowen, and Greta Gerwig. Opening Oct. 30. (Village East Cinemas.)

SKIN
In this drama, set in South Africa in the nineteen-fifties, a black girl is born to a white couple who are unaware of their racial ancestry. Directed by Anthony Fabian and starring Sophie Okonedo, Sam Neill, and Alice Krige. Opening Oct. 30. (Sunshine Cinema.)

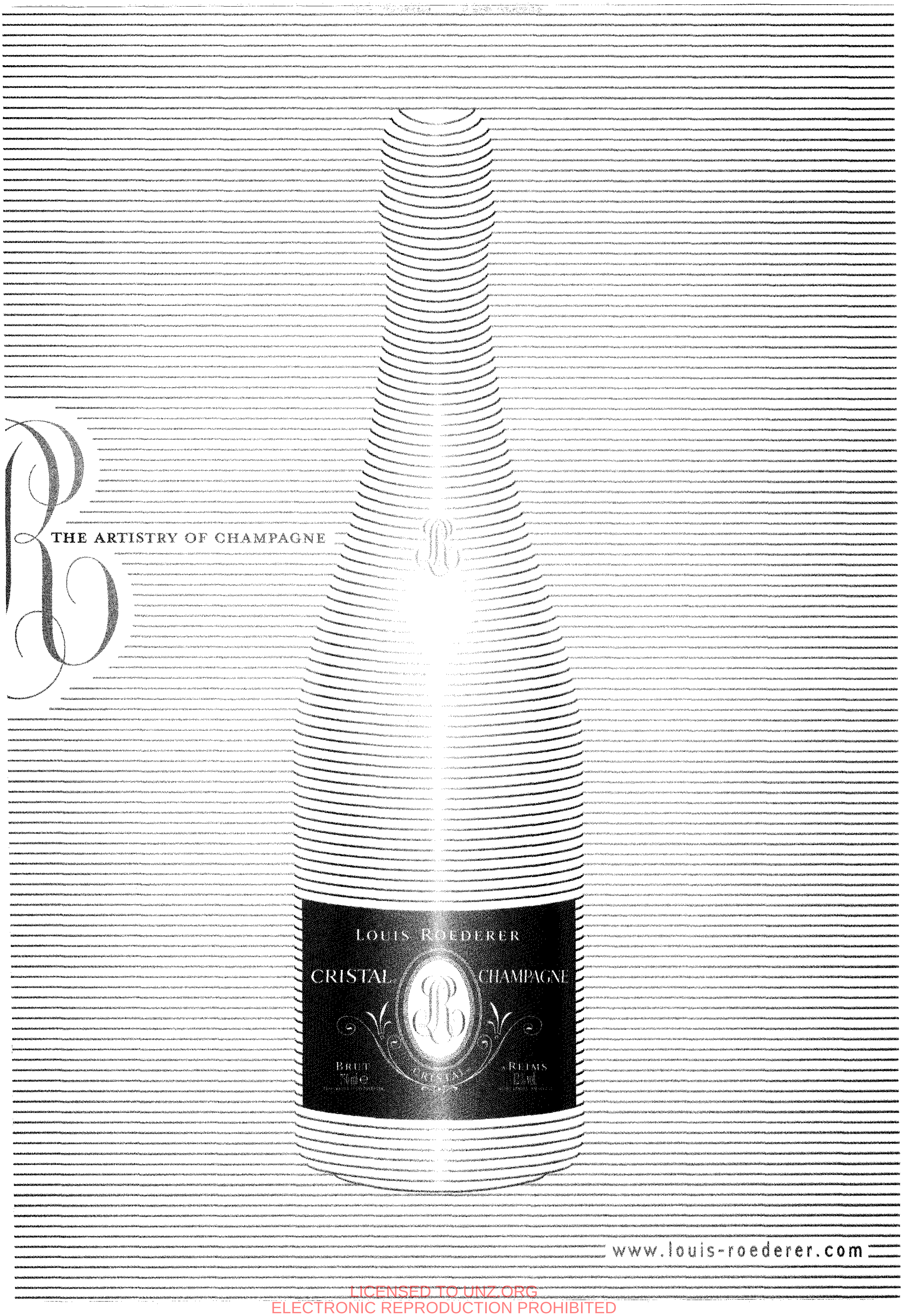
STORM
Hans-Christian Schmid directed this thriller, about a prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague, who travels to Sarajevo in search of witnesses to war crimes. Opening Oct. 30. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

YOU CANNOT START WITHOUT ME—VALERY GERGIEV, MAESTRO
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 2. (Symphony Space.)

NOW PLAYING

AMELIA
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

LE AMICHE (THE GIRLFRIENDS)
Michelangelo Antonioni's fourth feature film, from 1955, is a glossy romantic melodrama of prosperous modernity. Clelia (Eleonora Rossi Drago) moves to Turin to open a new branch of the high-fashion boutique that she managed in Rome. When Rosetta, the flighty bourgeoise in the adjoining hotel room, attempts suicide, Clelia takes her under her wing, joins her circle of friends, and gets caught up in their frivolous, desperate games of love. What makes this conventional drama mysteriously original is the details: the architectural contours of the film's myriad locations seem to determine the action of the people who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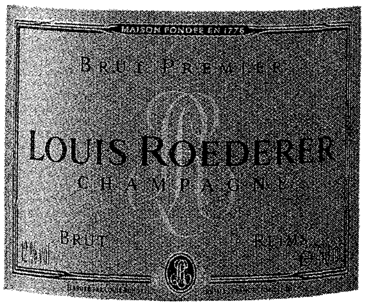
SECURING QUALITY

With a history stretching back to 1776, Champagne Louis Roederer has undoubtedly had to show persistence and resilience along the way: disruption of the winery by various conflicts in the early twentieth century—including the First World War, which alone destroyed more than half of the 300 acres acquired by Louis Roederer in the nineteenth century—led Léon Olry-Roederer, Louis' great-grandson, to expand the winery's estate in order to ensure continuity during any period of crisis. His foresight led to the creation of a brut multi vintage, a wine of several vintages with a consistent taste, regardless of the harvesting year. Today, this wine is called Brut Premier.

THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS

Brut Premier Champagne is one of the most intricate of all Champagne wines to produce. The wine brings together seven different vintages in a blend composed mainly of Pinot Noir, with a touch of Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier. The additional inclusion of older reserve wines—wines that have matured in oak casks for several years—gives the complexity and roundness that characterizes Brut Premier. After blending and bottling, Brut Premier is aged at least three years and then an additional six months after disgorging. Brut Premier epitomizes the Louis Roederer style, combining the fruitiness and freshness of a youthful wine with the more complex characteristics of one that is fully mature.



A MATTER OF TASTE

The result of Louis Roederer's intricate process is a pleasurable wine, deliciously smooth and mature, that completes a casual dinner with friends as well as it creates a celebratory atmosphere at fine restaurants. With a pale golden color and a fine bead, Brut Premier offers a lively mix of aromas and flavors, producing an indulgence that is sought out as much for its consistent, fresh flavors as it is for its prestigious name. Each bottle provides a bountiful mixture of white and red fruits, such as apple, pear, blackberry, and cherry, as well as notes of hawthorn, toast, and almond. Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon, Champagne Louis Roederer's Head Winemaker, tastes in Brut Premier a triumph in contemporary winemaking built upon a rich past: "In the mouth, the wine has structure, richness, and length. It is a full, complex wine that is both modern and powerful, while remaining a great classic."

A PERFECT PAIRING

Brut Premier has something different for everyone, a fit for every occasion. Boasting freshness and finesse, this wine is commonly renowned as an apéritif. But many would argue, because of its structure, that the quality of the wine is best understood when paired with cuisine. Didier Elena and Philippe Jamesse, the two-star Michelin chef and the head sommelier, respectively, at the luxurious Château Les Crayères Hotel in Reims, France, suggest a number of delicious accompaniments to Brut Premier: langoustines or other shellfish served with honey and brioche; terrine of foie gras with almond jelly; and liver served with white fruit such as peaches and mirabelle plums. In addition, Brut Premier pairs well with white fish, ceviche, or even soufflé. With or without an accompanying dish, the multifaceted nature of Brut Premier makes every experience inimitable.

A TOAST TO PERFECTION

For centuries, Champagne Louis Roederer has been perfecting its meticulous techniques, ensuring that each bottle is unique—all the while maintaining the same high standards devised by Louis Roederer himself. As you open a bottle of Brut Premier, you experience a family's great legacy, their tireless commitment to high-quality craftsmanship, and—with that first sip—the artistry of Champagne.

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traverse them, and the film's assorted portraits, reflections, sketches, and eye-catching clothing have more reality than the empty, miserable characters to whom they lend identities. Antonioni's quietly audacious attempt to convey the inner workings of modern life is also a standard-issue romance—of exactly the sort that fills his heroines' minds. In Italian.—*Richard Brody* (MOMA; Oct. 29.)

ANTICHRIST

What are we meant to do with the new film from Lars von Trier? Stare in wonderment, stare in horror, throw up, walk out, or laugh? Each response will have its adherents, and von Trier hasn't lost his talent for dividing an audience. Whether he can any longer tell a story without sliding off the rails is another matter. Consider his latest plot, in which a nameless married couple (Charlotte Gainsbourg and Willem Dafoe) lose a child when he wanders out of a window while they are having sex; in an effort to confront and assuage their grief, they head for a cabin in the woods, where the wife chooses to express her feelings by the slightly unorthodox means of genital mutilation. This is done both actively and passively; it repels on purpose, but, worse still, it grabs all the attention and wrecks any sense of balance in the movie—a shame, because von Trier, until now, has probed with a calmer intensity the desires that follow bereavement. He has also, in league with his director of photography, Anthony Dod Mantle, conjured all manner of startling and spectral images; ironically, the film is at its best when it swerves away from adult material and ventures into the fairy-tale landscapes of a child.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 10/26/09.) (In limited release.)

CAPITALISM: A LOVE STORY

Capitalism, according to Michael Moore: a system of organized theft in which the rich forever rob the poor. Moore gathers random examples of greedy behavior—for instance, a juvenile-detention center in Pennsylvania that is run for profit, in which sentences for minor offenses are mysteriously extended. And he celebrates mini-revolts, as when the workers at Republic Windows and Doors, in Chicago, refused to leave when they were summarily fired. It's hard to quarrel with his anger over hardworking Americans who are tossed out of a job or a house, or with his grief over the fate of his home town, Flint, Michigan, the subject of his first success, "Roger and Me," twenty years ago. Moore has never recovered emotionally from the closing of the G.M. plants there. In the movie's most touching moment, he accompanies his father, now very old, as he stares in horror at the flattened wasteland where the plant he worked at once stood. But Moore is so mesmerized by Flint's tragedies that he thinks G.M. went bankrupt because it closed plants in the eighties. Modern capitalism, with its torrential flow of money across borders, is beyond him. It's a sad movie—funny in spots, but wounded and bewildered.—*David Denby* (10/5/09) (In wide release.)

COCO BEFORE CHANEL

Fulfilling the promise of its title, Anne Fontaine's film lifts the veil on the early years of Gabrielle Chanel. This is no guarantee of the naked truth, since, as Chanel's biographers admit, she was ferociously adept at cloaking her unmodish past in legend and lies; but our heroine's progress, nonetheless, has an air of plausibility—from the small, suffering lass at the orphanage to an unsuccessful tavern singer who segues smartly into a kept woman. The keepers are, first, a jolly landowner (Benoît Poelvoorde), and, second, a suspiciously smooth British heartbreaker named Boy (Alessandro Nivola). (Did Chanel, no fool, not realize that, under the rules of romance, you should never fall for a man called Boy?) These actors fare slightly better than Audrey Tautou, who launches into the lead role but seems unable to quell her natural cuteness; the real Coco could not have achieved what she did, you feel, without being as hard as chrome. Fashion followers, panting to see some classic Chanel designs, may feel cheated, since the movie halts precisely as her business gets going; there is a curious afterthought, before the final credits, in which modern supermodels traipse past the grande dame herself, but it's not clear what period—or what sort of ghostly fantasy—we are being invited to watch.—*A.L.* (9/28/09) (In wide release.)

THE DAMNED UNITED

A great real-life sports story—the brief and catastrophic 1974 tenure of the arrogant, telegenic soccer coach Brian Clough at the helm of the best British club, Leeds United—is here reduced to the lowest common denominator. Peter Morgan's script, based on a novel by David Peace, jumps around from 1968, when Clough's prior club, Derby County, first crossed paths with Leeds, to the mid-seventies, and the result is too much information, and too little. Each segment of the sprawling story feels boiled down to the bare minimum; the episodes that remain hook up in obvious ways and never dig deep into character or incident. The drama converges around Clough's personal animosity toward Leeds's grizzled, beloved former coach Don Revie (Colm Meaney) and his self-destructive ways of slaking his resentment. But Michael Sheen, as the flamboyant Clough, seems oddly tamped down and merely slick rather than ebullient; though Timothy Spall is quietly hearty as Peter Taylor, Clough's second-in-command, the director, Tom Hooper, does his cast no favors by concluding with actual archival clips of Clough and Taylor. Their seductive vigor and devilish sparkle evoke depths unsounded by this superficial drama.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

AN EDUCATION

Peter Sarsgaard gives his best performance yet as David Goldman, a London hustler of enormous charm who zips around town in a maroon sports car, and who seduces, slowly and patiently, a very bright sixteen-year-old girl—Jenny (Carey Mulligan), a student from suburban Twickenham who is hemmed in by her cautious parents and her school and is rather too easily dazzled by champagne, a few dinner clubs, and a weekend in Paris. Based on a short memoir by the talented, acid-tongued journalist Lynn Barber (first published in *Granta* magazine), the movie is set in 1962, when England was gradually emerging from postwar austerities and the fabled antics of swinging London were just getting under way. Carey Mulligan is self-possessed, but what makes the movie unusual is the strange innocence of Sarsgaard's seducer: David is a liar and swindler, but he is as eager as Jenny is for pleasures of every kind—he enjoys them as if for the first time. The novelist Nick Hornby did the adaptation; the director, Lone Scherfig, born in Denmark, is alive to the social nuances of class and money in England. With Emma Thompson as a formidable, stupid, anti-Semitic schoolmistress.—*D.D.* (10/19/09) (In wide release.)

THE ERRAND BOY

In this 1961 inside-Hollywood spoof, Jerry Lewis, as director and star, brings out the "id" in idiocy. He plays Morty Tashman, an adenoidal bumbler who, under the guise of a promotion to messenger, becomes a corporate spy for the geriatric blunderers who are running Paramutual Pictures into the ground. In a string of painful yet funny set pieces, Lewis uncovers the grotesque realities of daily life in Hollywood, and of modern life at large—from sexual subjection in crowded elevators and the elegantly ritualized stupidity that passes for entertainment to the brazen arrogance of petty stars (one brilliant image matches the stars of "Bonanza" with a horse's backside). Meanwhile, the browbeaten, humiliated, manipulated, lonesome Morty, subject to his latent rage, wreaks havoc on every system, rule, and institution, and unintentionally yet gleefully ruins production after production; the results mock the codes of every major genre (a majestic crane shot through the wreckage of a musical is itself a model of the form). Lewis's antics bring out his radically democratic politics: when the yearnings for power (illustrated in one famous pantomime routine), self-expression, and love are thwarted, the ordinary man becomes the great anarch—he doesn't make a revolution, but he does make a mess.—*R.B.* (BAM; Nov. 3.)

GENTLEMEN BRONCOS

Compared to this wildly inventive, audacious, and genre-swirling comedy, the director Jared Hess's first two films, "Napoleon Dynamite" and "Nacho Libre," are models of narrative sobriety. The story is straightforward enough: Benjamin (Michael Angarano), a lonely teen-ager being

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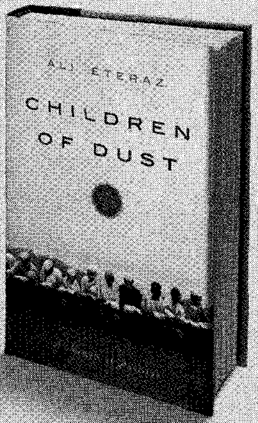

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homeschooled by his poor single mother (Jennifer Coolidge) in a dome-shaped house somewhere west of the Rockies, salves his soul by writing and illustrating whacked-out science-fiction fantasies. When he enters one in a story contest, his idol, the popular novelist Ronald Chevalier (Jemaine Clement), passes it off as his own and turns it into a best-seller. Meanwhile, two threadbare local filmmakers (Halley Feiffer and Hector Jimenez) also get hold of the property. Astonishingly, Hess turns this fable-like premise into a juvenile but grand-scale vision of earth and heaven. The small and pious town is filled with Bosch-like grotesques and jolting details (such as a store's lingerie department facing its gun counter), but it's transfigured by Hess's parallel worlds: Chevalier's supercilious version of Benjamin's story and the teen filmmakers' cheesy one are set against cosmic, transcendent—and ridiculously jejune—scenes from Benjamin's own imagination. The events are superintended by a stranger dressed in white: Dusty (Mike White, who also co-produced), Benjamin's guardian angel. Hess, who is from a Mormon community, blends local color with celestial inspiration to create a forthright and original religious vision matched by few films, whether dramatic or comic.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

THE INVENTION OF LYING

No one has ever lied, and deception is unknown. Such is the truth-loving, and downright creepy, world that is presented in this new comedy, written and directed by Ricky Gervais and Matthew Robinson. Gervais also stars as Mark, a chubby loser who spends his time bemoaning his fate as a chubby loser; some of the moans are in voice-over, others are directed at unsympathetic colleagues—the driest of them played by Tina Fey and Rob Lowe—or at the beauty (Jennifer Garner) whom Mark unfruitfully craves. Then, one day, he tells a lie (or, as he puts it, "I said something that wasn't"), and, from that point onward, the movie allows him free rein; he can devise hitherto unimaginable plots for the movie studio where he works and console the lonely with false reassurances, which they gladly accept. This is promising territory, but most of it goes to waste, as the film staggers and veers between a snarling sendup of religious faith and a mawkish, low-energy attempt at rom-com; love will find a way, Gervais appears to insist, resorting to the oldest fiction of all. With a suspicious number of cameo appearances, including one by his regular collaborator Stephen Merchant and another by Edward Norton.—*A.L.* (10/12/09) (In wide release.)

THE KING OF MARVIN GARDENS

Indecipherable, dark-toned movie about brothers and spurious goals and the American Dream. Set in the decaying playground of Atlantic City, in the gray, wintry off-season, it keeps declaring its alienation. Bruce Dern works hard trying to be charismatic as the promoter brother who fronts for black gangsters (Scatman Crothers is the big boss). Jack Nicholson is the artist brother. He does monologues on late-night FM radio, with such pronouncements as "Goodbye, written word" and, referring to his own life, "Tragedy isn't Top Forty—which is just as well." Trying to act intellectual Nicholson wears a prissy expression, huddles in his overcoat, and gives a dim, ploddingly serious performance. (If the roles had been reversed the film might have had a *little* energy.) As Dern's aging, rejected mistress, who is being replaced in his affections by her own stepdaughter, Ellen Burstyn works valiantly, but her role is a series of florid gestures—it's like all of Claire Trevor's biggest scenes put together. This is an unqualified disaster of the type that only talented people have; the producer-director, Bob Rafelson, and the scriptwriter, Jacob Brackman, seem to be saying "Let them eat metaphors." Released in 1972.—*Pauline Kael* (MOMA; Oct. 30 and Nov. 1.)

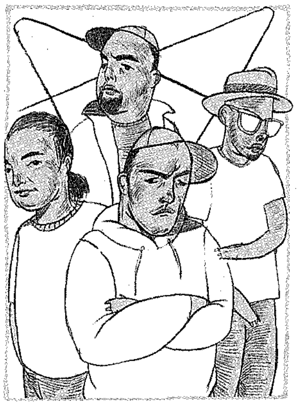
NIGHT AND DAY

The Korean director Hong Sang-soo takes on the self-imposed challenge of filming boredom and frustration without becoming boring and frustrating. Though he doesn't always succeed, he redeems even the few bare patches with exquisite style, self-excoriating confessional audacity, and keen cultural criticism. Most of the film takes place in Paris, to which Sung-nam (Kim Yeong-ho), a no longer young artist from Seoul, flees when he expects to be ar-

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
BEATING THE SISTEMA

For five hundred years, Angola was a colony of Portugal; even after it achieved independence, in 1975, the two countries remained intimately linked. The large number of Angolans living in Lisbon kept cultural artifacts flowing between the countries; the dance music called *kuduro* (which translates as "hard ass," more or less) was just one of them. The band Buraka Som Sistema is currently the best-known group playing *kuduro*, and its appearance earlier this year at Bowery Ballroom was an ecstatic, stomping success. The music combines laptops, percussion, live drummers, singers, rappers, and dancers. Buraka Som Sistema doesn't simply represent the cultures of Portugal and Angola. Its sound is one big postcolonial payback: a low-budget version of techno and house, born in Luanda, with room for almost any up-tempo beat pattern. Jamaican dancehall has been the source of many steps, but as long as you're sweating, you're entirely *kuduro*. Buraka Som Sistema plays (Le) Poisson Rouge on November 4th.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*



LEAH HAYES

rested on drug charges. Living in sodden exile in a hostel in the Fourteenth Arrondissement, he settles into the Korean expatriate community and spends his time with three young women who are well aware that he has a wife back home. Hong presents their uneasy liaisons as a series of diary entries, which are dated with title cards and apostrophized by Sungnam's voice-over remarks, and he films them in tense, restrained long takes that suggest the sharp, dry strokes of engravings. Yet the clumsy entanglements they reveal are worlds away from the psychological subtleties of indigenous French romances, and this is Hong's point. Despite the ease of travel and the cross-cultural curiosity of contemporary globalized artists, the difference between modern France and repressed, tradition-bound South Korea remains, in Hong's view, as great as the title suggests. In Korean, French, and English.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives.)

PARANORMAL ACTIVITY

In this creep-o-rama, a San Diego couple believe that their house is haunted and set up a video camera in search of proof. The film, which was shot more than directed by Oren Peli, uses its minuscule fifteen-thousand-dollar budget to good effect; the grainy images and live sound heighten the suspense. There is not much to look at, but this failing, paradoxically, holds the attention. Peli understands that the root of true fear is in waiting for something to happen. A close inspection might reveal the movie's many flaws, but, as a communal scare experience, it's as enjoyable as a visit to a spook house.—*Bruce Diones* (In limited release.)

RULES OF THE GAME

Perhaps the most influential of all French films, and one of the most richly entertaining. Jean Renoir's legendary butchered and then restored masterpiece is a farce about a large houseparty, gathered for a hunt, where the servants and masters begin to chase and shoot each other. The party at the country château is a tragicomic world in motion; ironically, once the whole mechanism is spinning the man who begins at the center of it—the romantic aviator (Roland Toutain)—is flicked off. With Marcel Dalio as the Marquis, Julien Carette as the poacher, Gaston Modot as the gamekeeper, Nora Gregor as Christine, Mila Parély as Genevieve, Paulette Dubost as Lisette, and Renoir as Octave. The script, by Renoir, assisted by Carl Koch, was derived from Alfred de Musset's "Les Caprices de Marianne." Cinematography by Jean Bachelet and J. P. Alphen; costumes by Chanel; Cartier-Bresson served as an assistant director. Released in 1939.—*P.K.* (Museum of the Moving Image; Oct. 29.)

SENSO

Luchino Visconti's 1954 epic of the Risorgimento stars Alida Valli, as Livia, a patriotic Venetian countess, and Farley Granger, as Franz, the dreamy yet cynical Hapsburg lieutenant who bewitches her during the final months of Austria's occupation of Italy. Granger's callow superficiality fits the role of an officer who bounces between hedonism and schoolboy fantasies of glory, and Valli comes through with passionate conviction as an unhappily married woman whose burst of erotic love explodes long-held moral and political principles. The whole movie has an intoxicating romanticism. Visconti encloses this doomed couple in an amorous bubble; then he whooshes them into history. The exultantly operatic production actually opens in an opera house, at a performance of "Il Trovatore," but even more inspired than this blast of Verdi is the presence of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony on the soundtrack, which Visconti uses to express Livia's vaulting illusions—her desperate belief in Franz's devotion and in his speeches about the arbitrariness of national boundaries. In the love scenes, Visconti masterfully choreographs the play of hands on flesh and hair; his large-scale action set pieces are both spare and surging; and his depiction of the divided soul of a crisis-torn era is utterly contemporary. In Italian.—*Michael Sragow* (MOMA; Oct. 28.)

A SERIOUS MAN

The Coen brothers in their black, bleak, belittling mode, and, except for a few moments, it's hell to sit through. The movie, set in a Minneapolis suburb in 1967, is a deadpan farce about middle-class bad taste (Jewish division), with a schlemiel Job as its hero—Professor Larry Gopnik (Michael Stuhlbarg), a physicist at a local university whose life is falling apart. Gopnik's wife (Sari Lennick) is leaving him for a sanctimonious bastard (Fred Melamed) who covers his aggressions against Larry with limp-pawed caresses and offers of "understanding." Larry's kids are thieving brats, and his sick, whining brother (Richard Kind) camps out on the living-room couch and refuses to look for work. There's more, much more, including a series of mishaps, sordid betrayals, and weird coincidences, but Larry, a sweet guy and "a serious man"—upright, a good teacher, a caring father—won't hit back. One wonders what kind of revenge the Coens are enacting; whatever indignities they suffered as teens, they can't have been much affected by them as grownups. Shot with mainly local actors in a super-hard-focus style by Roger Deakins. As a work of film craftsmanship, the movie is fascinating; in every other way, it's insufferable.—*D.D.* (10/5/09) (In wide release.)

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

After a strong beginning, Spike Jonze's live-action adaptation of Maurice Sendak's children's classic runs into the sands. Max (Max Records), an angry nine-year-old boy, bites his mother (Catherine Keener), runs out of the house, and joins the creatures—snouted, horned, clawed, furry—on a mysterious island. "Let the wild rumpus start!" he shouts, and they all run and jump, bash each other, and fall down in a heap, with Max happily buried among them. Jonze was right to use actors in elaborate suits (designed by Jim Henson's company) rather than fully animated figures. Most of the movements are weighted, rather than slickly virtuosic or glib. But after the opening scenes the movie turns unbearably melancholy. The creatures have mysterious relations with one another—friendships, love affairs, and long-standing grudges. They throw jealous fits or walk off in a huff, and we don't know where the hurt feelings are coming from or where they are going; after a while, the wild things sound like peevish adults elbowing one another out of the way at the Zabar's smoked-fish counter. The movie seems to be less about liberation than about futility. The creatures are voiced by James Gandolfini, Forest Whitaker, Chris Cooper, Paul Dano, and Catherine O'Hara. Screenplay by Jonze and Dave Eggers.—*D.D.* (10/19/09) (In wide release.)

A WOMAN UNDER THE INFLUENCE

The primal violence that binds men and woman has rarely been evoked as plausibly or intensely as in this 1974 drama, directed by John Cassavetes. It stars his wife, Gena Rowlands, as Mabel, a California housewife whose loopy mannerisms and unstable behavior embarrass and infuriate her working-man husband, Nick (Peter Falk), who morphs into an ugly household martinet. Then, egged on by his mother (played by the director's real-life mother, Katherine Cassavetes), he has Mabel institutionalized. The initial poignancy and whimsy of Mabel's chimerical ways shift to a psychodramatic horror show, featuring some of the most fearsome domestic confrontations ever filmed. Rowlands's astounding and terrifying performance goes beyond dramatics: under the relentless gaze of Cassavetes's camera and the ferocious emotions of his script, her porcelain face shatters into a Picasso-like tangle of planes. She—together with her own mother, Lady, playing Mabel's mother—brings out the animal ferocity that links parents and children. In Cassavetes's world, only the rough solidarity of husbands, forged through the rigors of work, keeps order—but at a terrible price.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Oct. 28-30.)

ZOMBIELAND

Woody Harrelson has a rip-roaring time in this comic splatterfest as a redneck from hell who is out to kill zombies. It's the kind of genre acting that doesn't get much notice, but it's a gleeful rampage of a performance. Though the movie owes a lot to its British predecessor, "Shaun of the Dead," it has an American pop edge that cuts through the familiar. This is basically a road movie, about a group of travellers (Jesse Eisenberg, Abigail Breslin, and Emma Stone) who are looking for safe haven after a worldwide plague has turned most of the population into flesh-eating ghouls. As directed by Ruben Fleischer, the action is all rabid mayhem—well played and blessedly disposable. With a memorable cameo by a Hollywood legend that says more about Tinseltown than hundreds of blood-sucking freaks do.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

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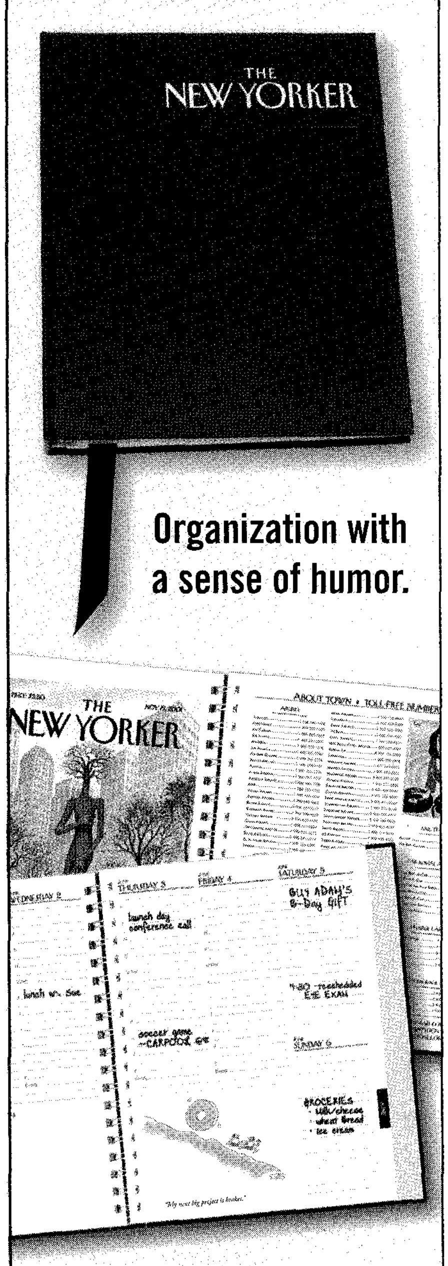

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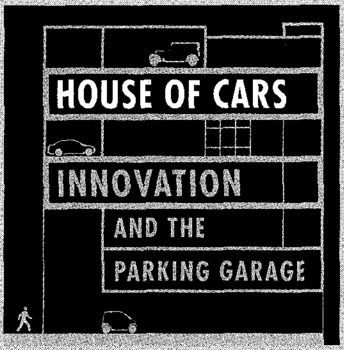

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ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Through Nov. 8: "Roger Corman: Poe and Beyond!" Oct. 28 at 7 and Nov. 1 at 3: "House of Usher" (1960). ♦ Oct. 28 at 9 and Oct. 31 at 5: "The Pit and the Pendulum" (1961). ♦ Oct. 29 at 7 and Nov. 1 at 9: "Premature Burial" (1962). ♦ Oct. 29 at 9 and Oct. 31 at 3: "Tales of Terror" (1962). ♦ Oct. 30 at 7 and Nov. 1 at 5: "The Raven" (1963). ♦ Oct. 30-31 at 9 and Nov. 1 at 7: "The Masque of the Red Death" (1964). ♦ Oct. 31 at 7: "The Tomb of Ligeia" (1964). ♦ Nov. 2 at 7: "The Wild Angels" (1966). ♦ Nov. 2 at 9: "A Bucket of Blood" (1959). ♦ Nov. 3 at 7:30: "Bloody Mama" (1970). ♦ Nov. 3 at 9:30: "The Little Shop of Horrors" (1960). ♦ Special screening. Oct. 30 at 8: "Jonas Mekas: Sixty Years in New York City," including "Williamsburg, Brooklyn" (1950/2003). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Oct. 31 at 3:30: "The Pittsburgh Trilogy" (1970-71, Stan Brakhage; silent). ♦ "Goethe-Institut Presents." Oct. 31 at 6 and 9:30 and Nov. 1 at 3: "The Halfmoon Files" (2007, Philip Scheffner; in English and German). ♦ "Performa Presents: Futurism on Film." All films are silent. Nov. 3 at 7: Program 1, "The Futurist Canon," including the U.S. première of "Thaïs" (1916, Anton Giulio Bragaglia). ♦ Nov. 3 at 9: Program 2, "Futurist Related Performance," including "Love Afoot" (1914, Marcel Fabre).

ARCLIGHT THEATRE
152 W. 71st St. (212-712-7237)—"The Silent Clowns Film Series." Oct. 25 at 2: "Dr. Jack" (1922, Fred Newmeyer) and "The Haunted House" (1921, Buster Keaton and Edward F. Cline).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through Nov. 9: "1962: New York Film Critics Circle." Oct. 28 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Ride the High Country" (1962, Sam Peckinpah). The 6:50 screening will be introduced by David Denby. ♦ Oct. 29 at 6:30 and 9:30: "Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?" (1962, Robert Aldrich). The 6:30 screening will be introduced by Melissa Anderson. ♦ Nov. 2 at 6:50 and 9:30: "The Chapman Report" (1962, George Cukor). The 6:50 screening will be introduced by David Edelstein. ♦ Nov. 3 at 6:50 and 9:30: "The Errand Boy" (†). The 6:50 screening will be introduced by J. Hoberman. ♦ "Freaky Cats." Oct. 30 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Sleepwalkers" (1992, Mick Garris). ♦ Oct. 31 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "House" (1977, Nobuhiko Obayashi).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—The films of Elia Kazan. Oct. 28-29 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "Wild River" (1960). ♦ "Halloween Gruesome Twosome." Oct. 30-Nov. 5 at 1, 4:35, and 8:10: "Scream of Fear" (1961, Seth Holt). ♦ Oct. 30-Nov. 5 at 2:35, 6:10, and 9:45: "Theatre of Blood" (1973, Douglas Hickox).

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—"The Ironic Curtain: Czech Cinema Since the Velvet Revolution." All films are in Czech. Oct. 28 at 2:15: "Empties" (2007, Jan Sverák). ♦ Oct. 28 at 4:15: "Some Secrets" (2002, Alice Nellis). The screening will be introduced by the actor Iva Bittová. ♦ Oct. 28 at 6:15: "Divided We Fall" (2000, Jan Hrebejk). ♦ Oct. 28 at 8:40: "The Loves of a Blonde" (1965, Miloš Forman) and "The Death of Stalinism in Bohemia" (1990, Jan Švankmajer). ♦ Oct. 29 at 2:15: "Something Like Happiness" (2005, Bohdan Sláma). ♦ Oct. 29 at 4:20: "Voyage to the End of the Universe" (1963, Jindrich Polák). ♦ Oct. 29 at 6:15: "The Karamazovs" (2008, Petr Zelenka), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Oct. 29 at 8:50: "Daisies" (1966, Vera Chytilová), introduced by Michal Bregant, the dean of FAMU International.

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Dec. 22: the films of François Truffaut. Nov. 3 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Mississippi Mermaid" (1970; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—Special screening. Oct. 30-Nov. 1 at 11 A.M.: "Blue Vinyl" (2002, Judith Helfand and Daniel B. Gold). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Oct. 30-31: "Monty Python Live at the Hollywood Bowl" (1982, Terry Hughes and Ian MacNoughton). ♦ "Stranger Than Fiction," a documentary series. Nov. 2 at 8: "Loot" (2009, Darius Marder).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"An Auteurist History of Film." Oct. 28-30 at 1:30: "The Student of Prague" (1913, Stellan Rye; silent) and "The Mysterious X" (1914, Benjamin Christensen; silent). ♦ "Carte Blanche: Béla Tarr and Sátántangó." All films are in Hungarian. Oct. 28 at 4: "Johanna" (2005, Kornél Mundruczó). ♦ Oct. 28 at 7 and Oct. 30 at 4: "Death Rode Out of Persia" (2006, Putyi Horváth). ♦ Oct. 29 at 4: "The Poor Outlaws" (1966, Miklós Jancsó). ♦ Oct. 30 at 7: "Passion" (1998, György Fehér). ♦ "To Save and Project." Oct. 28 at 4:30: "Senso" (†). ♦ Oct. 28-29 at 8 and Oct. 30 at 4:30: "A Woman Under the Influence" (†). ♦ Oct. 29 at 4:30: "Le Amiche (The Girlfriends)" (†). ♦ Oct. 30 at 8 and Nov. 1 at 2:30: "The King of Marvin Gardens" (†). ♦ Oct. 31 at 2: "The Professionals" (1966, Richard Brooks), introduced by Crispin Glover. ♦ Oct. 31 at 5 and Nov. 2 at 4:30: "Forbidden" (1932, Frank Capra. ♦ Oct. 31 at 8: "Nanook of the North" (1922, Robert Flaherty; silent). ♦ Nov. 1 at 5:30: "Christine of the Big Tops" (1926, Archie Mayo; silent) and short films by Margaret Conneely, including "Chicago: City to See in '63" (1962).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
Queens Theatre in the Park, Flushing Meadows–Corona Park (718-760-0064)—"Moving Image Masterpieces." Oct. 29 at 7:30: "Rules of the Game" (†).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." Oct. 30 at 9:30: "Lilith" (1964, Robert Rossen). The film will be introduced by the critic J. Hoberman.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Oct. 30-31: "A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors" (1987, Chuck Russell).

READINGS AND TALKS

POWERHOUSE ARENA
The literary magazine *Guernica* celebrates its fifth anniversary with a reading by Jonathan Ames (the creator of HBO's "Bored to Death"). There will also be music and beer. (37 Main St., at Water St., Brooklyn. 718-666-3049. Oct. 28 at 7.)

"WRITING HELL"
This event, subtitled "Curzio Malaparte and Vasily Grossman, Bearing Witness on Opposite Sides of the Eastern Front," addresses how art and literature cover war. It starts with a screening of "The Last Letter," Frederick Wiseman's 2002 adaptation of a chapter from Grossman's novel about the Holocaust and the siege of Stalingrad. Following the movie, Wiseman joins a discussion on the subject with the former war correspondent Chris Hedges, the film and sound editor Walter Murch, the historians Timothy Snyder and Ruth Ben-Ghiat, and Edwin Frank, the editor of the N.Y.R.B. Classics imprint. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. No tickets necessary. Oct. 29 at 6.)

"BEARING WITNESS IN CHECHNYA"
This event, paying tribute to the legacy of the human-rights activist and journalist Natalia Estemirova, who was murdered earlier this year, features the writers Salman Rushdie, Michael Arena,

PASSPORT
TO THE ARTS

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The fifth annual art event features a daylong tour of leading Chelsea and SoHo galleries, where participants receive a limited-edition pocket-size art collection. The gallery crawl concludes with a cocktail party, where guests will have the opportunity to bid on works of art in a silent auction.

A portion of the proceeds from the event will benefit Friends of the High Line.

For complete details, updates, or to purchase tickets,
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TICKETS: $45

The *New Yorker* Promotion Department will donate all proceeds from the silent auction and a portion of those from ticket sales (less taxes and processing fees) to Friends of the High Line, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and reuse of the High Line—a 1.5-mile elevated railway that runs along the West Side of Manhattan. The first section of the High Line opened as a New York City park in June, 2009, and is maintained by Friends of the High Line in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.

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Keith Gessen, and Elena Milashina, along with Tanya Lokshina, a researcher at Human Rights Watch, and the filmmaker Zarema Mukusheva. (Graduate Center, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. No tickets necessary. For more information, visit www.pen.org. Oct. 29 at 7.)

"VOL 1. BROOKLYN STORYTELLING"
The writers John Wray, Lev Grossman, Adam Wilson, and Juliet Linderman read from their work, to help this reading series celebrate its first anniversary. (Matchless, 557 Manhattan Ave., Greenpoint. Oct. 29 at 8. For more information, visit www.vol1brooklyn.com.)

BOOKCOURT
Bomb magazine launches its fall issue with a reading by Victoria Redel and Christopher Sorrentino, and a short staged performance of a play by Thomas Bradshaw. (163 Court St., at Dean St., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary. Nov. 3 at 7.)

BARNES & NOBLE
Mary Karr reads from and discusses her latest memoir, "Lit." (Broadway at 66th St. No tickets necessary. Nov. 3 at 7:30.)

"ADULT EDUCATION"
This irreverent and brainy monthly lecture series turns its attention to pranks, with an evening featuring presentations by the Yes Men, and the writers Tim Harrod, Patrick Di Justo, and Stephen Bruckert. (Union Hall, 702 Union St., Park Slope, Brooklyn. 718-638-4400. Nov. 3 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"HALLOWEEN WONDER CABINET"
Lawrence Weschler, the director of the New York Institute for the Humanities, has organized a day-long series of multimedia presentations covering everything from the intergalactic to the intercellular. Highlights include appearances by Laurie Anderson, who will talk about her work with NASA; David Wilson (the founder of Los Angeles's Museum of Jurassic Technology), who will discuss the Soviet space program; and Hamilton Morris, who will talk about psychedelics. (Cantor Film Center, New York University, 36 E. 8th St. No tickets necessary. Oct. 31, from 11 A.M. to 9:30. For a complete schedule, visit nyih.as.nyu.edu.)

"THE STEAM POWERED HOUR"
Last year, the *New Yorker* cartoonist Matthew Diffee organized sporadic evenings of bluegrass music and comedy, under the rubric "The Unnamed Music and Comedy Show," which featured the likes of Gillian Welch, Chris Thile, and Demetri Martin. He rechristened the series in January and has been putting it on monthly ever since. A Halloween show on Oct. 31, starting at 7, will feature music by the Five Deadly Venoms, comedy by Val Kappa, and a conversation with the paranormal investigators Brian J. Cano and Chris Mancuso, of the online series "SCARED!" (The Nuyorican Poets Café, 236 E. 3rd St., between Avenues B and C. www.nuyorican.org.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
As they enter the most crucial time of the season, the auction houses are hoping that buyers are feeling upbeat about the Impressionist-modern market. **Christie's** jumps into the ring first, kicking off with an evening sale on Nov. 3. Leading lots include one of Degas's beloved images of ballerinas in repose ("Danseuses," a pastel on paper), a brightly colored wartime portrait of a woman (probably Dora Maar) by Picasso, and a painting by Pissarro, "Le Quai Malaquais et l'Institut," recently restituted to heirs of the German publishing magnate Samuel Fischer. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ In the run-up to its Impressionist auction, **Sotheby's** will be presenting sales of prints (Oct. 29) and of Russian art (Nov. 2). The highlights among the prints, which include several works by Picasso, are the Spanish master's "La Femme au Tambourin," a voluptuous black-and-white etching and aquatint of Dora Maar, and a full set of nine architectural engravings by Louise Bourgeois, entitled "He Disappeared Into Complete Silence." Amid the Russian offerings of fine and applied art, a few Impressionist and post-Impressionist works stand out, such as an intimate portrait of the artist Boris Grigoriev's wife and son ("Mother and Child"), recently rediscovered in a private collection in Western Europe. As always, the magic of Fabergé is well represented; there are frames, pendants, and cigarette cases. Among the other precious decorative items is a miniature portrait of Peter the Great surrounded by diamonds, created as a gift for extraordinary services rendered to the Tsar. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ **Doyle** will offer an assortment of rare books, autographs, and photographs (Oct. 28), including a full set of Giulio Ferrario's eighteen-volume compendium of clothing from the classical period to the early nineteenth century, "Il Costume Antico e Moderno" (1826-29). (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.) ♦ There will be more autographs at **Swann** (Oct. 29), including documents signed by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John and Jacqueline Kennedy. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

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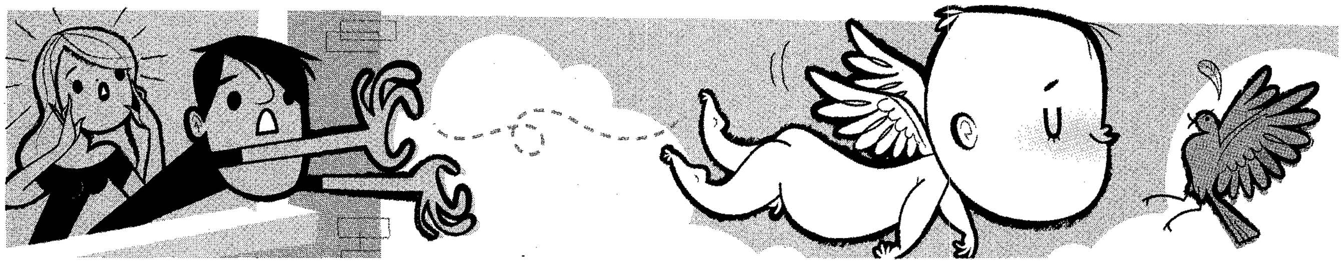
Visit the Goings On blog, at www.newyorker.com/go/goingson, for additional cultural coverage and commentary.



KIRSTEN ULVE

François Ozon's "Ricky," at BAM.

ON THE HORIZON

DANCE
COOL MOVES
Nov. 4 and Nov. 6-7

Karole Armitage and her troupe, Armitage Gone! Dance, present "Itutu," which explores the polyrhythms of the African band Burkina Electric and Lukas Ligeti's compositions for electric marimba. (718-636-4100.)

ART
EERO APPARENT
Nov. 10-Jan. 31

"Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future," at the Museum of the City of New York, is the first-ever retrospective devoted to the Finnish-American architect, whose commissions included the St. Louis Gateway Arch (which was completed in 1965), the TWA terminal at Kennedy airport (built from 1956 to 1962), and Black Rock, the CBS headquarters in Manhattan (built between 1960 and 1965). (212-534-1672.)

MOVIES
WEEKEND IN PARIS
Nov. 11-15

This year's version of BAM's "New French Films" series includes "Park Benches," a comedy by Bruno Podalydès starring Catherine Deneuve, and "Ricky," a fantasy by François Ozon about a wondrous baby. (718-636-4100.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
RESURRECTION
Nov. 12-Dec. 5

"From the House of the Dead," Janáček's dark and towering final opera (based on the Dostoyevsky novel), isn't exactly a lovely evening at the theatre. What makes the new Met production compulsory is the talent involved: the baritone Peter Mattei, the director Patrice Chéreau (who staged the legendary Boulez "Ring" at Bayreuth), and the conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen, who will be making his Met début. (212-362-6000.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
BACK IN TOWN
Nov. 23-25, Nov. 30, and Dec. 1-3

The comedian Robin Williams, whose plan to perform his one-man show "Weapons of Self-Destruction" on Broadway this spring was derailed by emergency heart surgery, brings the show to Town Hall for a limited run. (www.ticketmaster.com.)

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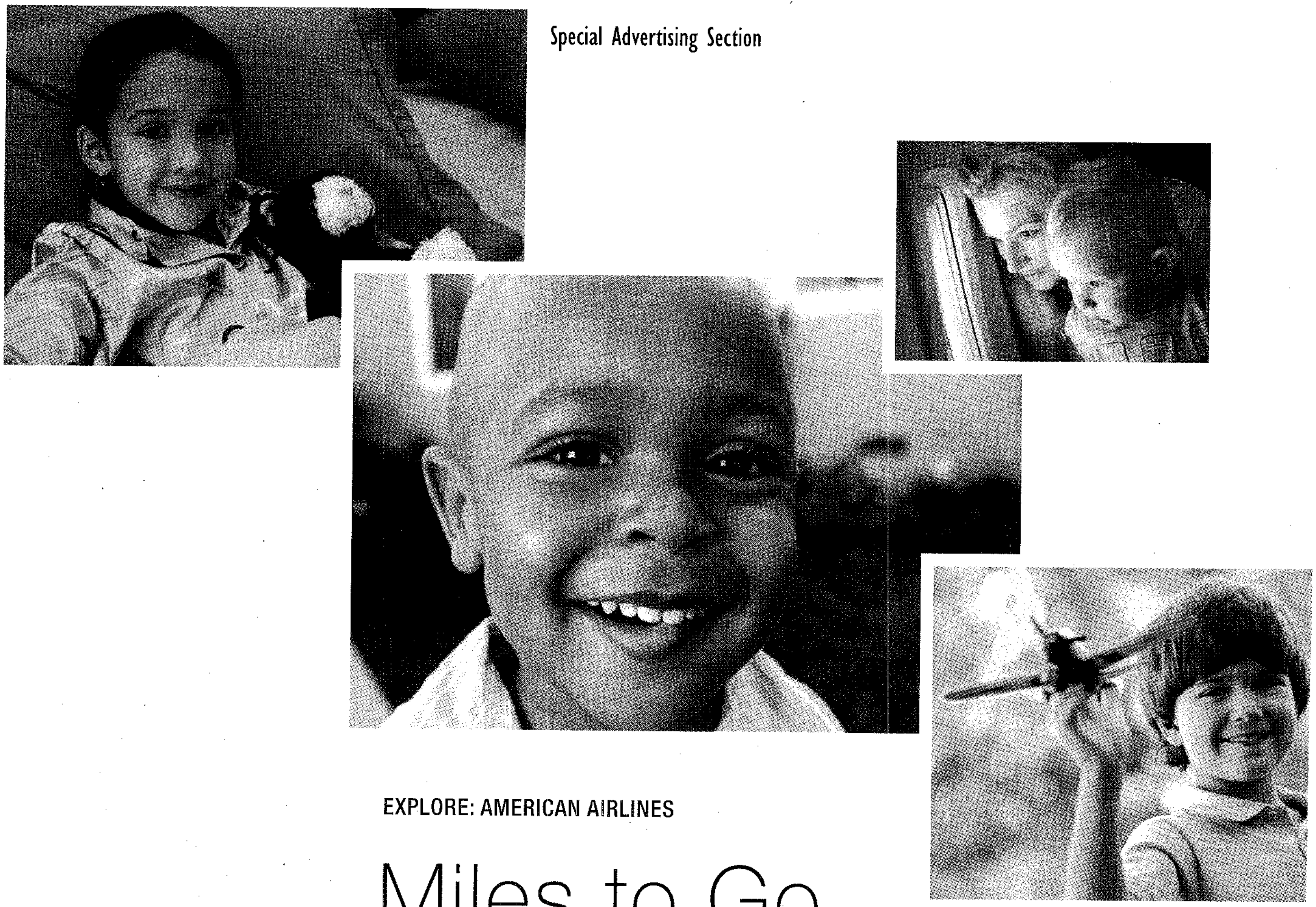

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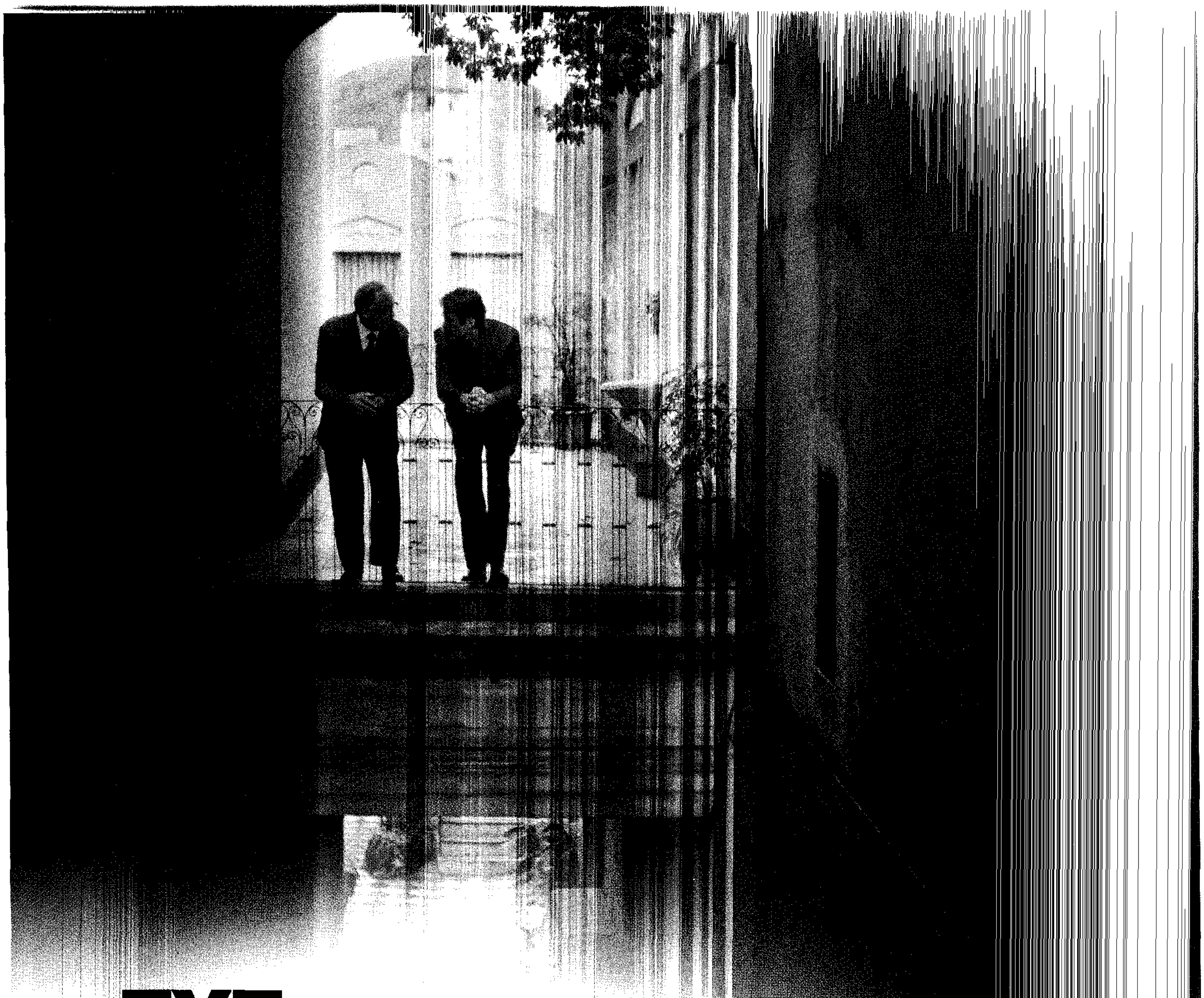

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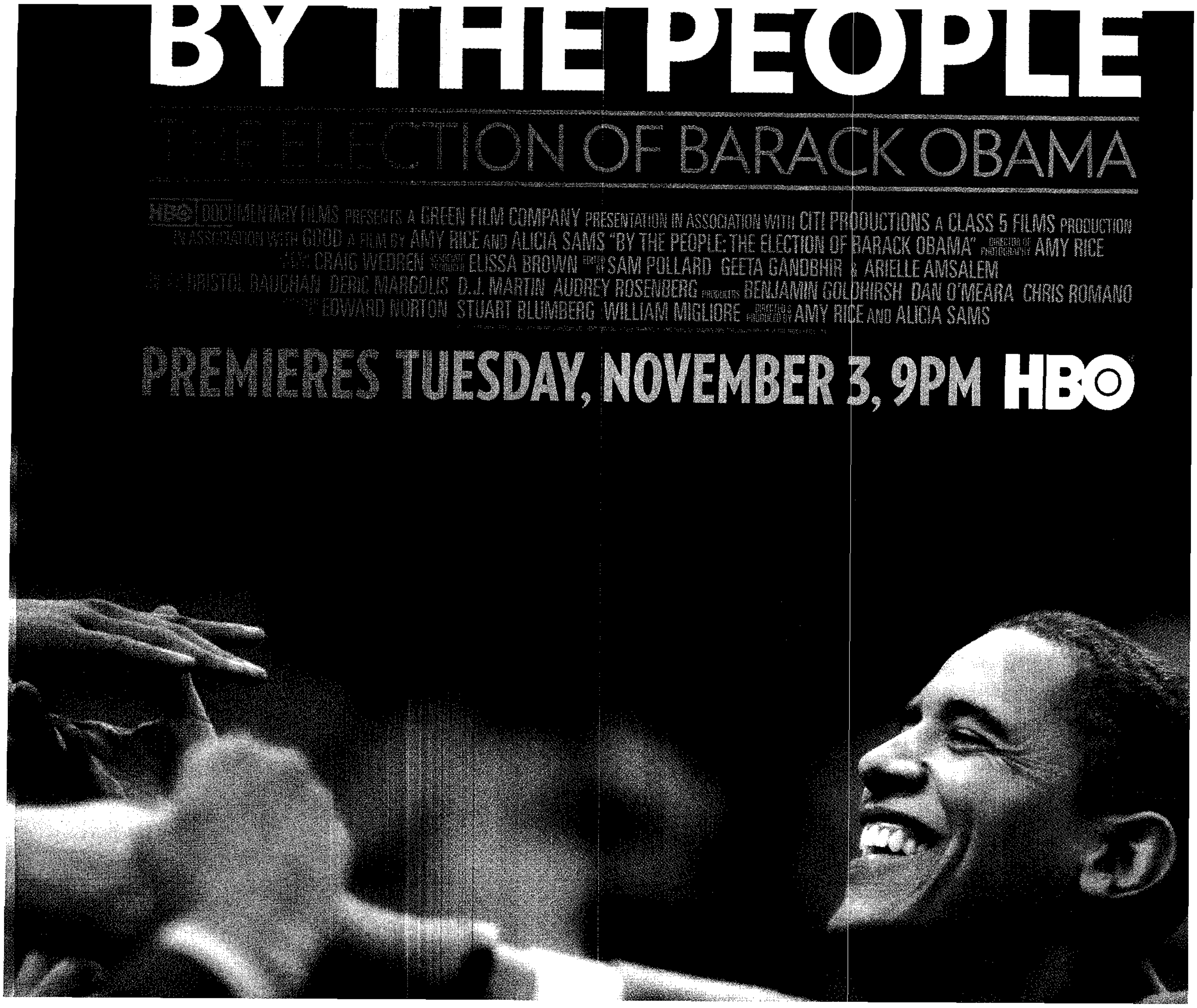

BY THE PEOPLE

THE ELECTION OF BARACK OBAMA

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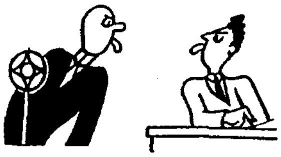
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

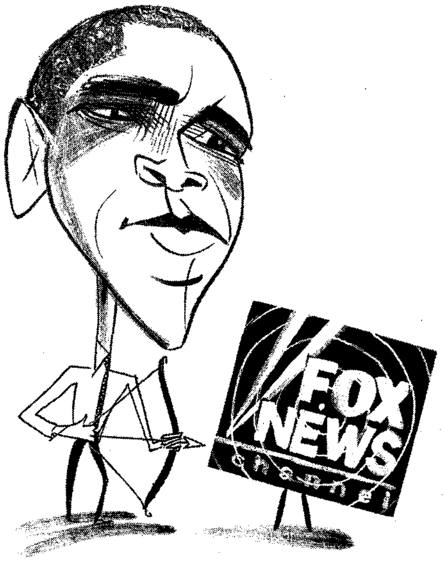
COMMENT
CHIN MUSIC



In 2008, half the people who watched the Fox News Channel were over sixty-three, which is the oldest demographic in the cable-news business, and, according to a poll, the majority of the ones who watched the most strident programs, such as Sean Hannity's and Bill O'Reilly's shows, were men. All that chesty fulminating apparently functions as political Cialis. Fox News shows should probably carry a warning: Contact your doctor if you have rage lasting more than four hours.

By effectively cornering the market on anti-Administration animus, Fox News has had a robust 2009 so far, and the recent decision by the White House to declare war on the channel is not likely to put a dent in the ratings. That decision has dispirited some of the President's well-wishers. It has also puzzled them. In American politics, it should be considered a good thing when, after you have won a Presidential election by more than nine million votes, your chief critics accuse you of filling your Administration with Nazis, Maoists, anarchists, and Marxist revolutionaries. That is the voice of the fringe, and the fringe is exactly where you want the opposition to set up permanent shop.

One line of objection to the White House's effort to ostracize Fox News is that Presidential wars against the press are always futile and self-defeating. Are they, though? So we are continually told by, well, the press. Actually, most people don't especially love journalists, and press-bashing has a mixed history. Lyndon Johnson alternately schmoozed and browbeat editors and reporters and got nowhere with either tactic. On the other hand, Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew demonized the press programmatically during their first term in office and were reëlected by a near-record margin. Still, wars of words are distracting, and Obama campaigned as a listener—a contrast with his supremely deaf predecessor that was evidently welcomed by the electorate. Why are his spokespersons throwing red meat to Fox's angry white men? Wouldn't it be better to supply them with only tofu smoothies?



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

There is no point in splitting metaphysical hairs over the concept of objectivity: Fox News is a politically biased organization. It is the creature of Roger Ailes, a man who has as much claim as anyone to be called the founding father of mass-media politics. In 1967, Ailes was a producer on "The Mike Douglas Show," in Philadelphia, when he met Richard Nixon. Nixon had every reason, after his disastrous performance in the 1960 Presidential debates, to regard television with dread, but Ailes persuaded him otherwise. Ailes left "The Mike Douglas Show" to help Leonard Garment and others invent the New Nixon, one of the great feats of modern advertising and the subject of Joe McGinnis's book "The Selling of the President 1968." Ailes later took over the cable channel CNBC; in 1996, Rupert Murdoch hired him to create the Fox News Channel. He knows his business.

One of the things Ailes knows is that journalism has changed since Agnew referred to the press as "a tiny and closeted fraternity of privileged men." In 1969, "the press" meant a handful of broadcast networks and a slightly bigger handful of nationally read papers and news magazines. In those days, one could plausibly talk about a media establishment. Everyone's head fit into the group photo.

No more. As Jeffrey E. Cohen documents in "The Presidency in the Era of 24-Hour News" (2008), the media has changed since 1968, as has the public's relationship to it, and in complicated ways. There is a lot more news out there, but the audience for it is much smaller. And although political reporting today is both softer and more critical, it has less effect on how the public regards the President than it did back in the days of balanced disinterestedness.

One manifestation of these changes has been mass-media niche journalism, a development, made possible by cable, whose opportunities Ailes was one of the first to appreciate. The more crowded and competitive this field becomes—more news chasing fewer newsies—the more journalism approaches the condition of coffee beans and major-league breaking balls: you never dreamed there could be so many varieties. But, unless you are an aficionado of political spin, you may prefer to grab the remote and start browsing for "Frasier" reruns. The market for news is narrowing down to people who need an ideological fix.

This has led to widespread distrust of all news media. According to a recent Pew survey, public belief in the accuracy of news stories is at a twenty-year low. Only twenty-nine per cent of Americans think that news organizations generally get the facts right; sixty-three per cent think that news stories are often inaccurate; sixty per cent say that reporting is politically biased. Republicans have traditionally held the press in lower esteem than have Democrats, but the Pew survey shows that Democrats are pulling even. In the past two years alone, a period when Democrats had a lot of news to feel good about, Democratic distrust of the press grew by double digits.

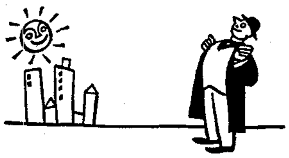
In a climate in which bias is increasingly taken for granted, cable channels have every incentive to enhance their appeal to their core constituencies. Among cable-news channels, Fox News is rated favorably by seventy-two per cent of Republicans against forty-three per cent of Democrats, and MSNBC is rated favorably by sixty per cent of Democrats against thirty-four per cent of Republicans. Many viewers treat Comedy Central as a news channel. Cable news, in short, is a sandbox. People throw things at one another, not just for fun but for profit. It is not a distinguished venue for statesmen or their surrogates to spend their time in.

The dubious efficacy of a war on Fox News is not the only reason to feel qualms. It's hard to kill the press, but it is not hard to chill it, and this appears to be the White House's goal in the case of Fox. "The best analogy is probably baseball," Robert Gibbs, the White House press secretary, said—meaning that throwing a few inside fastballs, a little chin music, gets hitters to back off the plate. Maybe, but he should also remember that deliberately throwing at a batter is grounds for ejection. The state may, and should, rebut opinions that it finds obnoxious, but it should not single out speakers for the purpose of intimidating them. At the end of the day, you do not want your opponents to be able to say that they could not be heard. It may be exasperating, but that is what the First Amendment is all about.

—*Louis Menand*

"One potato chip?"

DEPT. OF DISPUTATION
THE ORACLE



Among the grandees of the Princeton University faculty, past and present, Cornel West is the only one to have appeared in two sequels of "The Matrix," playing a Zion Elder called Councillor West; recorded songs with both André 3000 and John Mellencamp; and seen his words quoted on a Starbucks cup. A couple of weeks ago, West published a memoir titled "Living and Loving Out Loud." He did not write it, exactly; the book is an as-told-to with David Ritz, who has similarly collaborated with Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, and Grandmaster Flash. None of the above can be said of Christian Gauss or Woodrow Wilson.

Cornel West is everywhere, constantly on the road. A self-fashioned "scholar-bluesman," he travels from lecture hall to church pulpit and on to Barnes & Noble, wearing a formal and elegant uniform—black suit, white shirt, French cuffs, black tie, black scarf. "I've got four more just like this one," he says. "And the dry-cleaning bills to go with it."

West stopped by Times Square the other day on his way to a speaking engagement uptown. He had in tow his publisher and his sweetly beleaguered assistant, Mary Ann Rodriguez, who valiantly attempts to get him to his gigs on time; just in case Rodriguez loses him, he carries a tiny leather-bound date book crammed tight with the details of his obligations, paid and otherwise. "I've never spent a weekend in Princeton," West said. "I'm on the road, on the move, brother. I meet magnificent people, I have a great time, I learn so much, and, at the same time, I've got to make some money, because I've got women in my life—or women in my past, let's put it that way."

Of the many roles that West has played in the academy and the media lately, it's been his ongoing support-slash-critique of Barack Obama that is the most curious. It was not a relationship that began with daffodils and candy. At Tavis Smiley's State of the Black Union conference, in February, 2007, West said that he admired Obama as a "very decent,

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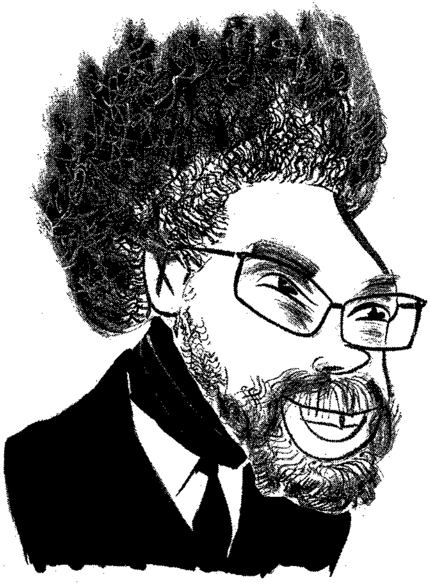
brilliant, charismatic brother," but lamented that he "holds us at arm's length," the better not to alienate white voters.

A few days later, Obama called West and the two men spoke for what West described as four hours. "First thing he said was 'Well, Brother West, you're much more progressive on these things than I am. We're not going to agree on everything.' I said, 'Of course! My only thing is—you be true to yourself, I'll be true to myself. That's all I ask.' Then he went in and talked about what King meant, what that legacy meant, how he'd been shaped by it, and so forth. And it was a genuine opening. That's why I could discern a certain decency. I said, 'Brother, I will be a critical supporter. I'll be a Socratic supporter.' "



Cornel West

Nine months later, at a fund-raiser at the Apollo Theatre, West introduced Obama with unbridled enthusiasm and Obama returned the favor, calling West "a genius" and "an oracle."

West campaigned for Obama in Iowa, South Carolina, Illinois, and Ohio, but he was dismayed by his speech on race in Philadelphia. West thought the speech was politically "masterful," but "intellectually, it was pretty thin." He kept his thoughts to himself, but he was especially annoyed that Obama had said that the Reverend Wright was full of rage, because he was somehow stuck in time, still wrestling with Jim Crow, and that he equated black anger with white resentment. "Have you seen the young brothers and sisters in prison, on the block?" West said. "I don't mind being an angry black man in terms of having righteous indignation at injustice, given the situation right now in the country. But as a candidate he had to distance himself. . . . There have been excesses of affirmative action and so forth and so on, but Jim Crow de facto is still in place. . . . Who are the major victims of that? The poor—disproportionately black and brown and red. You got to tell the truth, Barack. Don't trot out this shit with this coded stuff!" And yet, West said, "I intentionally remained relatively silent. It was a very delicate moment."

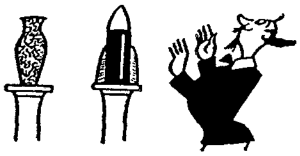
Now, a year after the election, West has kept to his promise: he is a Socratic supporter. "I don't want to downplay the progress, though, because Obama is a black man. It's just that: first, you've got the parents. It's more Johnny Mathis than Curtis Mayfield, or more Lena Horne than Sarah Vaughan, in terms of phenotype. And, second, you've got someone who really is a master at easing the fears and anxieties of white brothers and sisters. That's part of the basis of his success. And I don't put that down. We need different kinds of people in the world."

So far, West finds himself infinitely more impressed by Obama's mastery of "spectacle" than by his attention to the poor. "In terms of the impact on young people, I think it's a beautiful thing," he said of Obama's election. "But, in the end, even spectacle has to deal with the darkness. That's where the bluesman comes in. Guy Lombardo can be nice on a certain night, but you're going to need Duke Ellington and Count Basie."

—David Remnick

AT THE MUSEUMS

SCREEN TEST



The conceptual artist Rob Pruitt was sitting in a downstairs room at the Guggenheim Museum the other day, listing all the things he likes about the Oscars. "I love all the conventions: the red-carpet aspect, and the speeches, and the cameras catching the expressions of the people that didn't win," he said. "It's just so celebratory and positive."

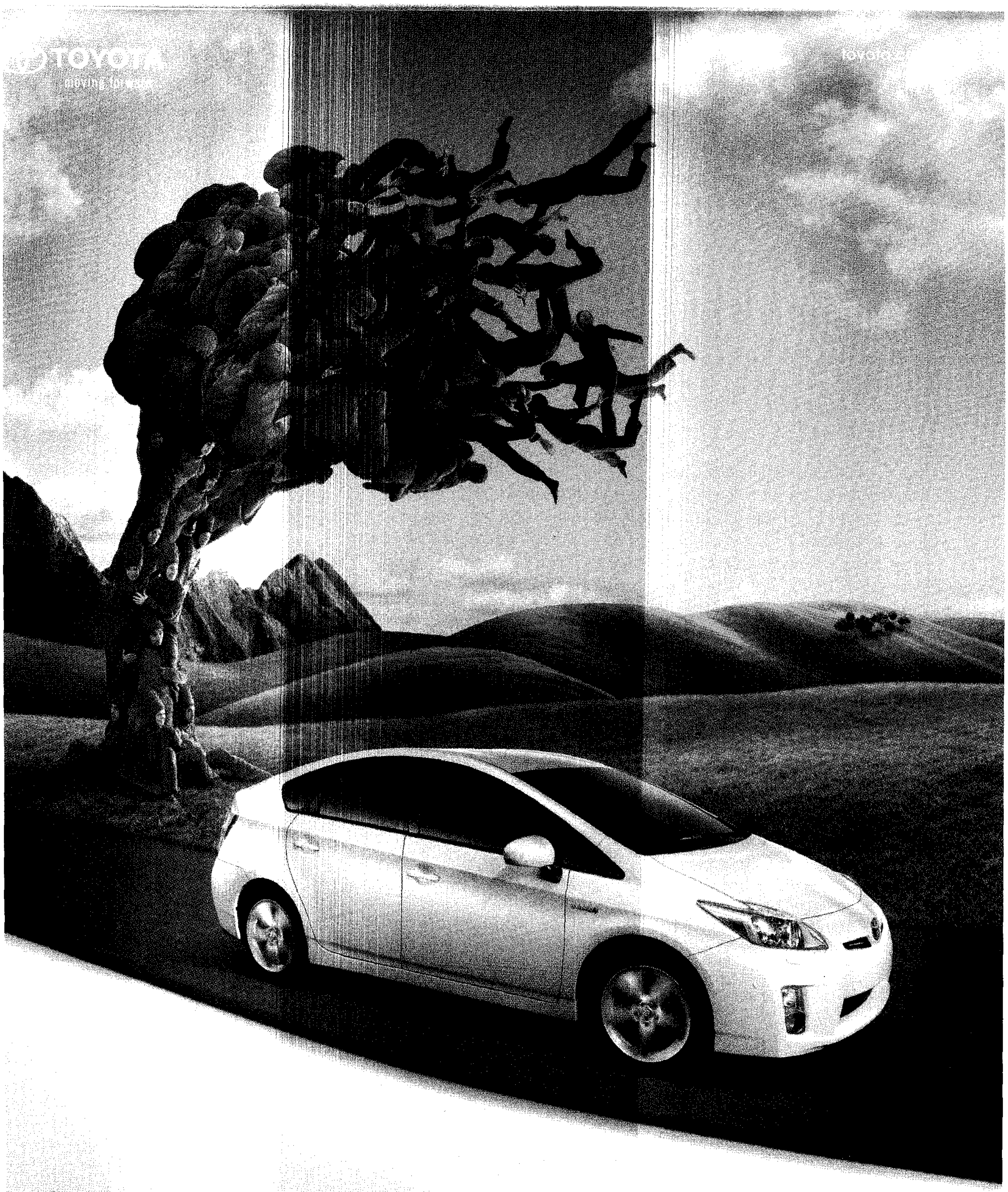
Pruitt, who is forty-five and boyish, despite a five-o'clock shadow, is known for works like "Flea Market" (2007), in which he invited friends to set up booths at the Frieze Art Fair and sell things, from old T-shirts to some suspiciously popular brownies, and the 1998 installation "Cocaine Buffet," in which he invited people to get down on their knees and snort a sixteen-foot line of cocaine. A couple of years ago, he said, he was reflecting on the art world, and he decided that the main thing it lacked, besides labor unions and health insurance, was an awards show.

"Art is pretty glamorous," he said. "I thought that an awards show would be a great community-strengthening experience." It took some time, but on October 29th the Guggenheim will host what Pruitt is optimistically calling the First Annual Art Awards.

The evening will include dinner, catered from restaurants in Bushwick and Williamsburg (neighborhoods where many artists live); comic interludes; celebrity presenters from both art and Hollywood (Cecily Brown, Mary Heilmann, James Franco, and Nate Lowman); and, of course, the bestowing of awards, in categories including New Artist of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, Curator of the Year, and four categories of Show of the Year. The award statuettes, which Pruitt designed, are empty champagne bottles with light bulbs where the corks should be, sitting in ice buckets filled with plastic ice.

"It's an award, but it's also a lamp," Pruitt explained. "I was thinking about Jasper Johns's light bulbs"—Johns produced a series of sculptures, drawings, and prints based on light bulbs—"and how the light bulb is this icon of ideas. And then combined with champagne and how much artists love to drink—drinking their ideas and celebrating."

Pruitt was at the Guggenheim to tape a video, for the museum's Web site, of the nominees being announced. (They were selected by a ballot sent out to several hundred artists, critics, curators, and dealers.) The idea was to replicate the announcement of the Oscar nominees, which usually features the presi-



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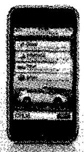

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dent of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and a previous Best Actor or Actress. Since there weren't any previous Art Award winners, Pruitt had recruited Clarissa Dalrymple, the British-born curator whose fabulous outfits and business flops—she ran two galleries that went out of business—have made her a cult figure in the art world.

When Dalrymple arrived, looking like Helen Mirren's racier twin, in a tight green dress and four-inch gold heels, Pruitt slipped away to change into a suit that had been sent over by the awards' main sponsor, Calvin Klein Collection.

"Super-good," Dalrymple said when he reappeared. "Is it yours to keep?"

"I don't know," he said. "I'm not wearing underwear."

Pruitt seemed more at ease now. "This is like 'High School Musical' to me," he said. "Dressing up and putting on a show is a lot of fun."

He and Dalrymple rehearsed their lines a few times, and Pruitt checked that the shot would include the screen to their right, which displayed the Art Awards logo. "I think the logo helps make it very legit," he said. Then he said, "Someone say, 'Take One!' " and the filming began.

Everything started to go wrong: technical problems; lines that suddenly became tongue-twisters (a German institution called the Museum für Gegenwart in Dalrymple's faithful pronunciation kept sounding like the "Museum für Gegenfart"). Finally, after a few more bloopers, they declared themselves done. Pruitt seemed pleased. It turned out he could keep the suit.

—*Kate Taylor*

DEPT. OF HOOPLA THAT'S ITALIAN

Women in Italy have taken to the streets recently to protest the shenanigans of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, but, at a party in Manhattan the other day, a different side of Italian life was being discussed. The event, held in the Madison Avenue store of the leather-goods company Tod's, marked the launch of Tod's new coffee-table book, "Italian Touch," whose title has nothing to do with the inappropriate doings of prime ministers. The book, which weighs about as much as a medium-sized leg of prosciutto, consists of more than three hundred pages of photographs of attractive Italian aristocrats hanging out on their family properties. Its purpose, according to promotional materials, is "celebrating the Italian lifestyle."

But what is the Italian life style? "It's a very casual, relaxed life style," said Emanuele della Valle, who is a member of Tod's board of directors, and who does marketing for the company. On the other hand, he added, it also means "having everything perfect." A waiter walked by with a tray of pink-and-orange appetizers.

"Lobster mango?"

"No, I don't think so," della Valle said. "They don't look too Italian."

He continued, "It's about acknowledging a set of rules and then breaking them, without forgetting what the rules are. For example, if you wanted to get a great suit, you'd go to the old tailor in your city, because you know he'll do a better job—no disrespect—than, say, a big flagship in the middle of Tokyo." Della Valle was wearing the same outfit he always wears: blue-tinted glasses with thick black frames ("They shout 'Hollywood junior producer,' " he said), jeans, a baggy Brooks Brothers shirt, and a tailored blazer. "Once, I would pay more attention," he said of his look. "But I gained a few extra pounds, and I thought, Let's decide on a formula."

A young filmmaker named Riccardo Costa said that the Italian life style is "about finding the right reasons to live your life." He added that he had recently completed a short film on this subject: in it, he stands near the Astor Place subway stop with a camera and polls passersby about their careers. "I asked, 'What are you doing? Are you happy to be doing that?' Some people said, 'I think so,' but they were not sure. Some people said that they didn't ask themselves the question, because they were afraid of the answer." The majority of New Yorkers told him, "Happiness doesn't exist."

A jewelry designer named Philip Crangi said the Italian life style was "a little beachy, with a blazer." A man who asked to be referred to as "an unidentified artist—not a flying object" said the key to the Italian life style was "to live in the moment." He was with a blond architect from Austria named Bettina Zerza, who talked about Italian houses with "beautiful interiors." She said, "The book doesn't show the beautiful parties they have in the interiors," adding, "They're not scared. They open up their houses and have twenty people over!"

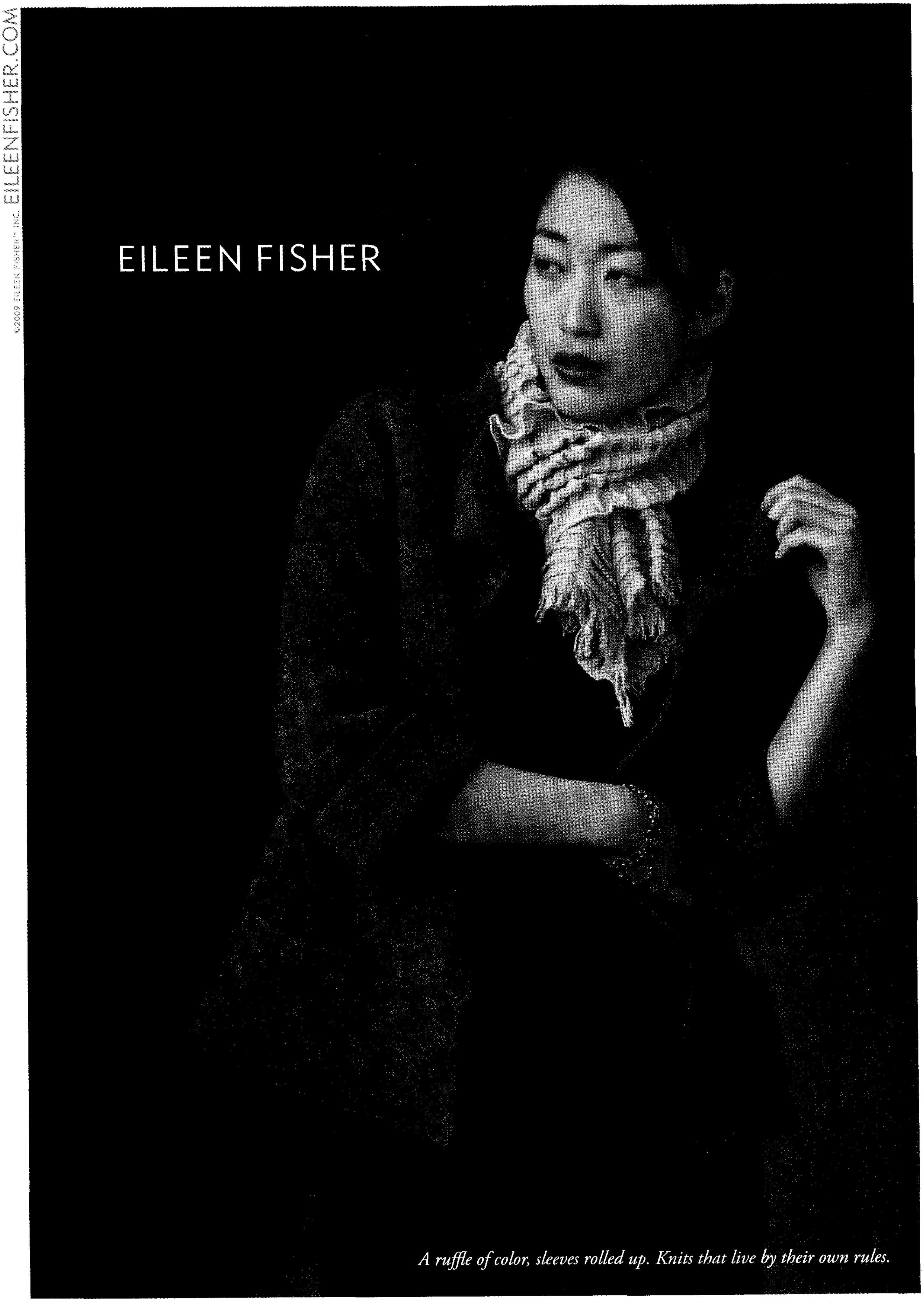
"I have news for you," the unidentified artist said. "Some Americans do the same."

A guest named Stephane Siboni, who is French, said, "The main difference between the Italians and the French is that the Italians wear red pants. We don't." Bobby Flay, the chef, said that he'd just come back from Sicily, and he had one piece of advice: "Don't de-scale your fish in the sink." The actress Julianne Moore had just returned from the Venice Film Festival. "The big talent in Venice is getting on and off the boat in high heels," she said, mentioning a particularly challenging pair by Givenchy.

Brooke Shields said that although she is part Italian, she'd never known that side of her heritage, because of a family dispute. But she'd recently reconnected with long-lost relatives in Tortona. "I love that they eat," she said. "Really eat!"

She was standing near Max Girombelli, the owner of the menswear company Duca Sartoria. He pointed out that his firm had made all the clothes he had on. "In Italy, everything is done for the details," he said. "You would never see an Italian that's sloppy." He was wearing a blue tie and a blue pocket square, and he became indignant at the suggestion that the tie (floral-patterned) and the handkerchief (checked) might have been intended to match. "You want them to be different!" he said. "Never the same—that's American." He pointed to the handkerchief. "*This* is Italian. Always close. Never the same."

—*Lizzie Widdicombe*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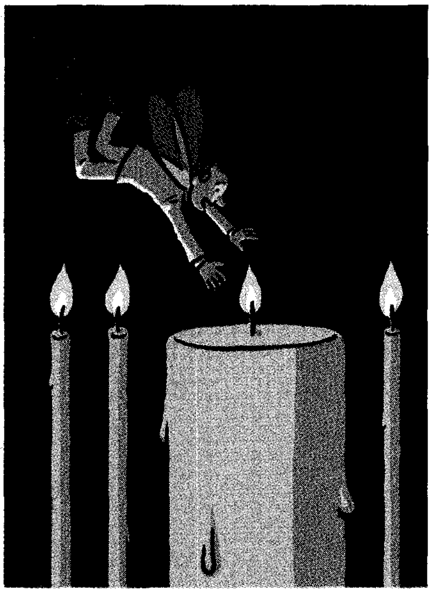
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
WHY BANKS STAY BIG

Before the financial crisis, the banking industry was too concentrated and clubby. And now? It's even more so. In the midst of the crisis, the country's four biggest banks—Citigroup, Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, and Wells Fargo—actually got bigger. Thanks primarily to a series of government-sanctioned mergers, they now control almost forty per cent of the country's total banking deposits and two-thirds of its credit cards, and issue half of all mortgages. Investment banking, too, remains more or less dominated by the usual suspects, which have seen their market share grow as the number of their competitors has shrunk. Firms that were recently on the brink of collapse haven't had to struggle to hold on to their old customers, as you might have imagined. They've had to struggle to keep up with their new ones.

This isn't because the big banks have been making a special effort to be customer-friendly. On the contrary, in the credit-card market they've slashed credit lines and jacked up interest rates. In retail banking, they haven't capitalized on the benefits of size (like lower borrowing costs) to cut prices for their customers, the way big retailers like Wal-Mart do. Instead, they typically pay lower interest rates on deposits than smaller banks do, and charge higher interest rates on loans. Overdraft fees, too, have typically been higher at big banks than they are at smaller ones. In investment banking, there has traditionally been little or no competition on price, and that hasn't changed. There are no discounts in the M. & A. department.

So why aren't customers and clients moving on? In the case of ordinary consumers, "switching costs" have a major effect. It's a serious hassle to shut down a bank account and transfer money to a new one, especially with direct deposit, automatic bill payments, and the like. The same is true of refinancing at a different bank from the one that currently holds your mortgage, or trying to persuade a new bank to give you a business loan. These costs aren't trivial: a 2001 study showed that the cost of switching a loan came to about a third of the loan's annual interest rate. Even if people are dissatisfied with their bank, it's usually cheaper not to fight than to switch. If you're a restaurant or a retailer, you have to work hard to insure that your customers keep coming back. But once banks get a customer he's pretty much theirs for good.

The big banks have the further advantage of their brands, however tattered the brands may be. It's nearly impossible for consumers to evaluate how healthy a bank is. So, at a time when banks are failing with some regularity, the size and ubiquity of these big banks is reassuring. It seems improbable that they will simply vanish (the way a bank like IndyMac did), because the government won't allow it. It's possible, in fact, that the crisis, instead of eroding the reputational advantages of the big banks, ended up bolstering them. In times of uncertainty, people are inclined to shun experiment for the safe choice.



Reputation arguably plays an even bigger role in the competition for corporate business. A major part of what Wall Street firms do for their clients is, in effect, to vouch for their financial prospects: when a bank underwrites a company's bond offering or an I.P.O., it is essentially certifying that company in the eyes of investors. Companies hire high-profile firms to advise on mergers not just for the advice but for the public signature of approval. The more powerful the bank that's giving the advice, the better the cover it offers. Success, then, feeds on itself: having a big market share today makes it easier to win business tomorrow. Researchers have found that during the stock-market bubble of the late nineteen-nineties higher-reputation banks actually did a worse job of managing I.P.O.s: they regularly set new stock offerings at a point well below what the market was willing to pay. But companies still avidly wanted those banks to run their public offerings. Similarly, a series of studies of M. & A. advice has found no evidence that deals managed by market-dominant, high-reputation firms work out better. No matter—a 2007 paper by economists from M.I.T. found that banks were generally hired not on the basis of their performance but on the basis of their market share. That makes it tough for newer or smaller competitors to break in: it's a variant of the "to get a job you need experience, but you can't get experience without a job" problem.

Should we worry about all this concentration? Maybe megabanks are what we need. Certainly most developed nations have banking systems even more concentrated than ours. The trouble is that the "market" for banking is so distorted—by switching costs, by government subsidies and guarantees, and by the banks' market power—that it's hard to know whether big banks are adding value or are simply exploiting their oligopolistic positions. We do know that too much concentration in finance increases risk, since a handful of dominant players are more likely to make the same kinds of mistakes, and jeopardize the entire system. Unless consumers rise up en masse to move their money to credit unions, the market isn't going to deal with the problem. And that means Washington has to.

—*James Surowiecki*

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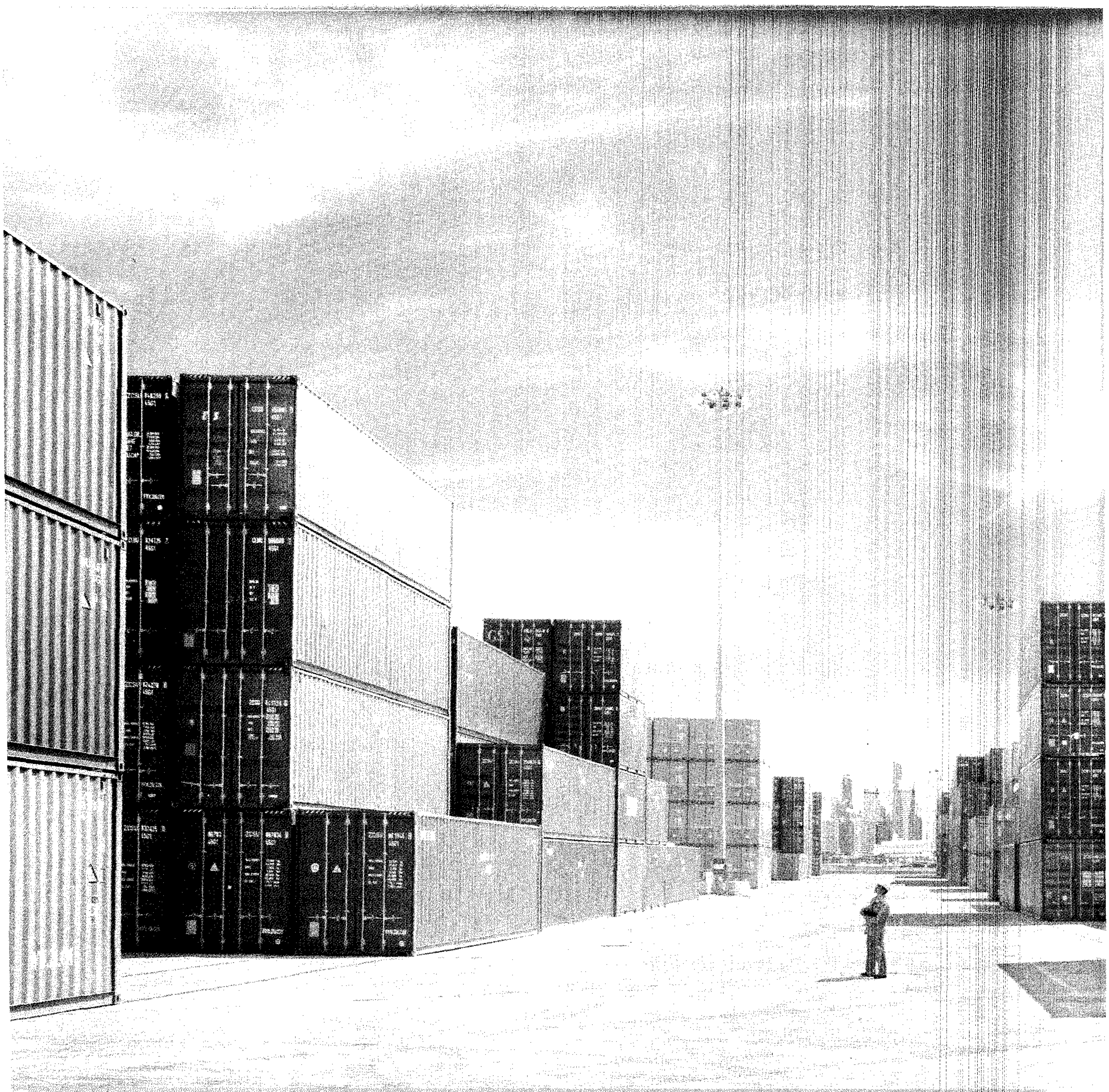
Surowiecki's notes for this column.

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN



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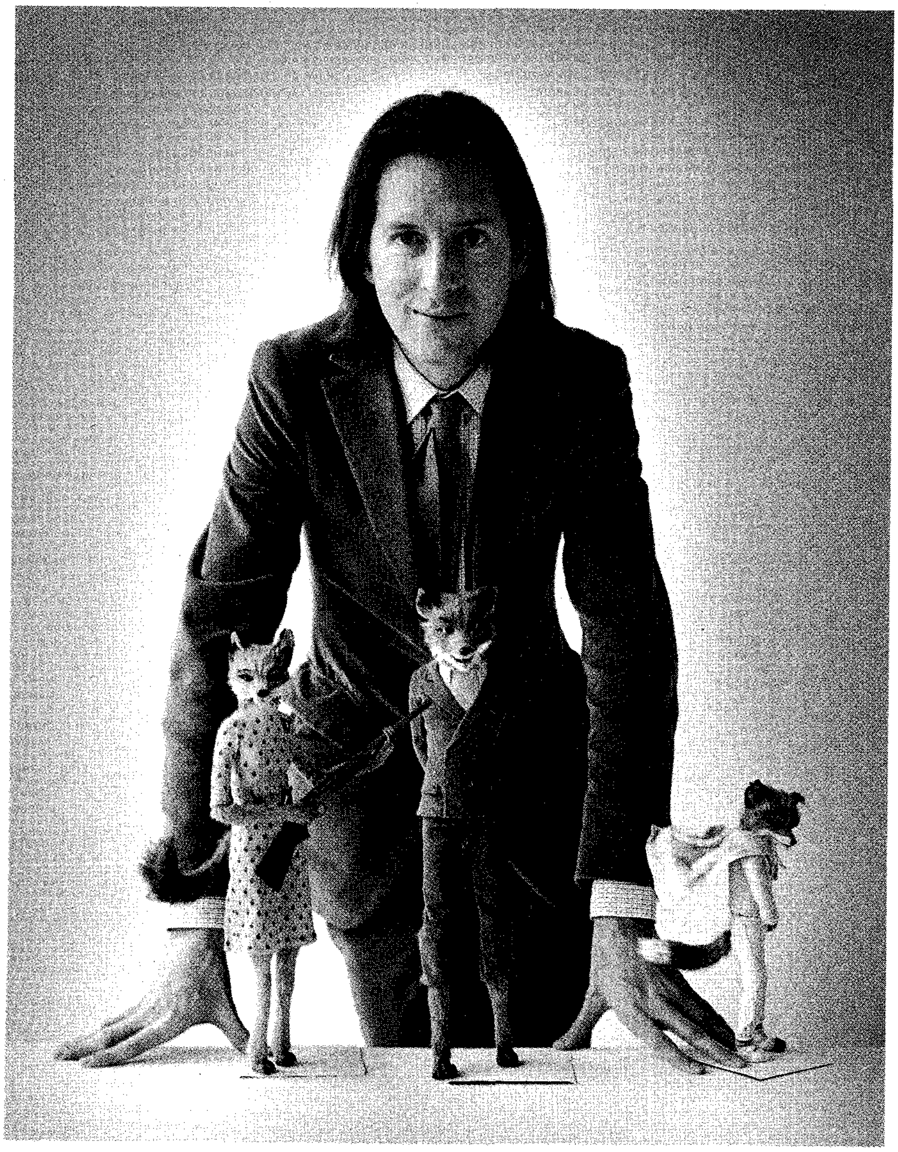
PROFILES

WILD, WILD WES

A master of high style goes looking for adventure.

BY RICHARD BRODY



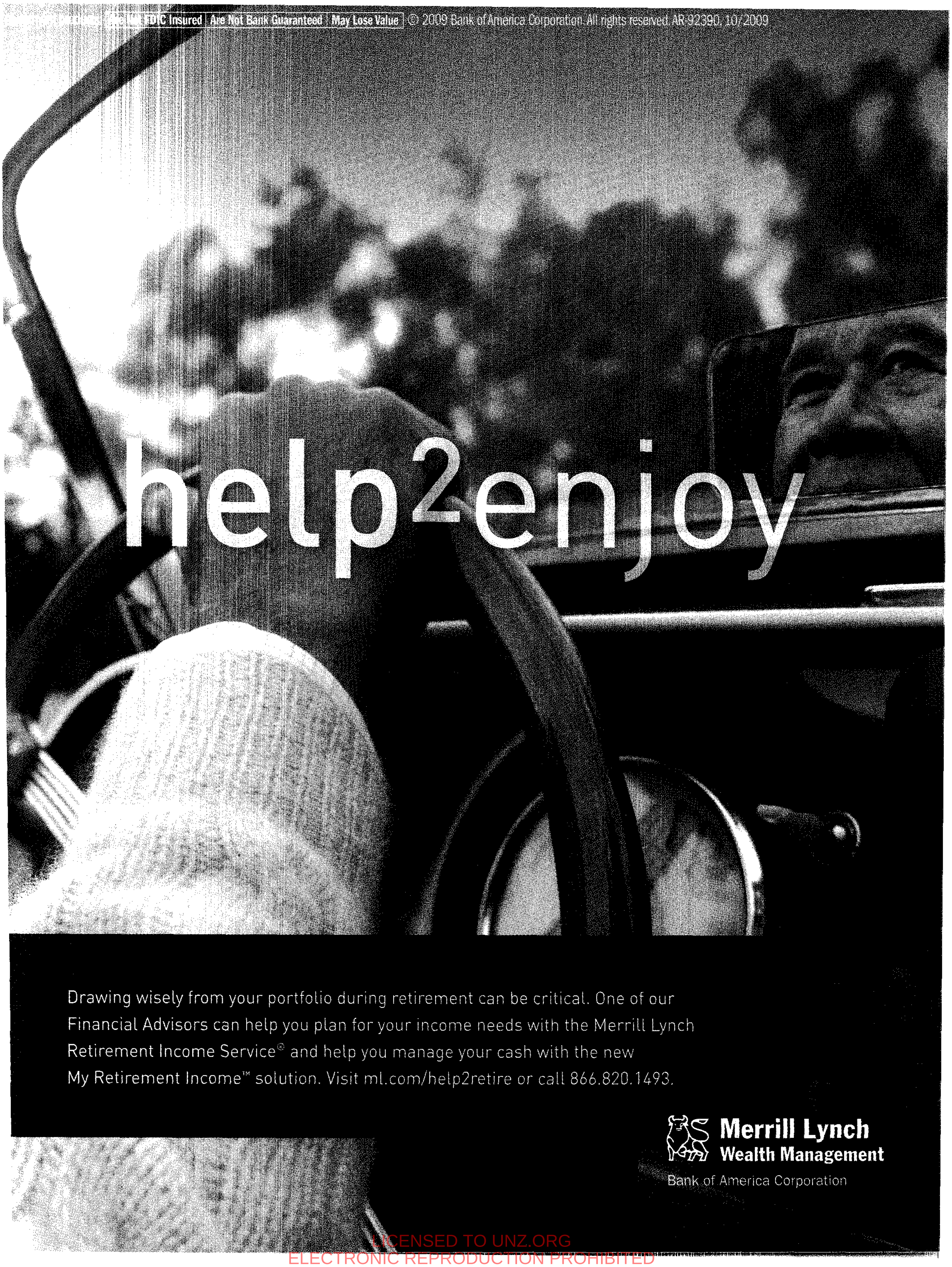
Wes Anderson with figurines from "Fantastic Mr. Fox." Photograph by Tim Walker.

The director Wes Anderson is making a movie in a large studio in the East End of London while seated at his desk in Montparnasse, in Paris. His workspace is as carefully arrayed as the set of one of his films. A boxy nineteen-seventies touch-tone telephone rests on a dark-wood Art Deco desk, alongside a new Apple keyboard, a big computer screen and a scanner, a modern cordless phone, and a pair of small speakers. Behind the desk stand bookcases filled with art books, encyclopedias, uniform editions of literary classics, and a variety of tastefully selected objects, including a battered leather suitcase with metal corners and a postcard of Albert Camus. The walls are the color of Chinese mustard; yellow curtains shade high windows. The windows are cracked open, and the airy room, one of many in the bright and spacious apartment, is alive with the buzz of scooters and the whirr of cars from the street below.

The phone rings, and Anderson, a tall, slender man of forty, answers it. He's wearing brown thin-wale corduroy pants, a purple sweater over a sky-blue shirt, and beige socks without shoes. He stays on the phone for about twenty minutes, talking while sending and receiving e-mails, which come with a blip and go with a *whoosh.* Anderson speaks clearly and rapidly, with a disarming blend of serenity and intensity; his ideas spiral out in an avid yet smoothly flowing rush. "The only real issue, I think, that we want to deeply explore is, What can we do to the ending?" he says to Andy Weisblum, the film's editor, who is in New York. "I had always pictured it being more positive, even though everything I've done to the set and to the way it looks has made it more bleak."

For more than a year, Anderson has been engaged in the production of an animated adaptation of Roald Dahl's 1970 children's book "Fantastic Mr. Fox," the story of a fox whose pilfering from three grotesque farmers provokes them into absurdly violent and extreme attempts to capture him, as he leads his family and friends on increasingly wild and desperate adventures in order to survive. Anderson, who has made five previous feature films, including "Rushmore" and "The Royal Tenenbaums," is using a hoary technology known as stop-motion animation, in which figurines are placed in a physical décor, moved infinitesimally by hand, and photographed, frame by frame, in each new pose; the succession of these poses, edited together, simulates motion. The same technique was used to bring King Kong to life in 1933, as well as in the "Wallace and Gromit" films, Tim Burton's "Corpse Bride," and Henry Selick's "Coraline." Anderson could not have chosen a more painstaking way to make his first animated film. And doing it on the industrial scale required for a studio motion picture—this one is being produced by Twentieth Century Fox Animation—is a gigantic undertaking. It occupies two buildings at 3 Mills Studios, on London's River Lea; in one, a vast, hangarlike stage, animation is taking place simultaneously on twenty-nine sets.

Anderson initially assumed that, given the exactingly technical format, his participation in the day-to-day shooting



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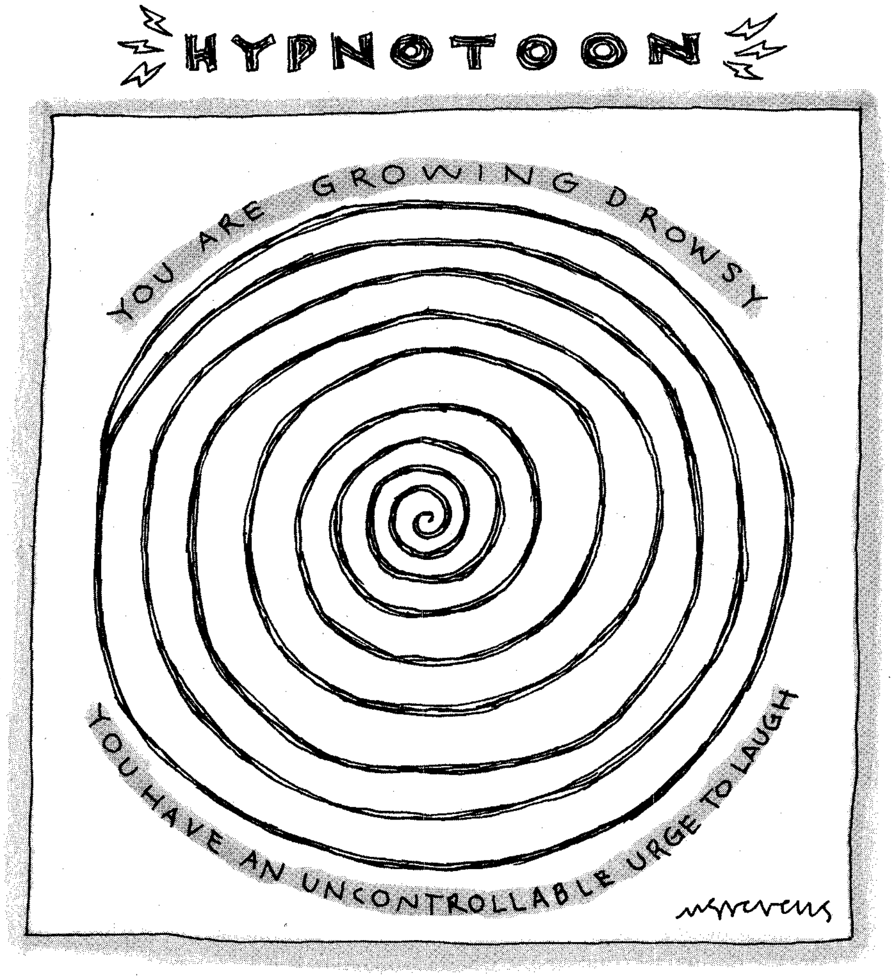
would be limited. In fact, though, he “found a way to insanely micromanage the movie anyway.” He did his micromanaging almost entirely from his apartment in Paris (a city that he loves, and in which he has spent much of his time since 2005), fielding phone calls and answering dozens, even hundreds, of e-mails a day from his colleagues in London and New York. At Anderson’s request, new systems were devised that allowed him real-time access to the pictures that were being shot. As Jeremy Dawson, one of the film’s producers, told me, “The animators are like musicians, in that they take an inanimate object and infuse it with life.” Anderson conducted them, for the most part, via remote control. “On this one computer is almost the entire history of the film,” he said, pointing to the Apple Mac Pro on the floor beside his desk. Allison Abbate, another of the film’s producers, who also worked on “Corpse Bride,” said, “His vision is serious, and it’s driving our technology.” She added, “In the past, we sent videotapes.”

At dinner that evening, in a bistro on the Rue de Vaugirard, Anderson said, of working on the movie, “It’s a weird combination of sedentary and frantic that I’ve never quite experienced before.” It wasn’t what he’d expected, but Owen Wilson, his close friend and a longtime collaborator, pointed out that the process “seems to suit how meticulous Wes is about getting things exactly as he imagines them.” He added, “When I was with him in Paris, he wasn’t even leaving his apartment. I was joking that it would be like the middle of ‘Shine,’ where the kid plays Rachmaninoff and then collapses. . . . It seemed like his work was never over, because he could control the whole universe of the movie.”

Anderson’s renown as a director was sealed in 2000, when, at the age of thirty, on the basis of his first two films, “Bottle Rocket” (1996) and “Rushmore” (1998), he was named “the next Scorsese,” by Martin Scorsese himself, writing in *Esquire*. Scorsese was right in one respect: Anderson’s first films, like Scorsese’s, introduced to cinema a new tone, an original mood. But it was hardly the tone or the mood of the early Scorsese. Anderson’s characters are rarely violent or even particularly demonstrative; their dialogue is understatedly droll, and their behavior is at once quietly idiosyncratic and startlingly sincere. The performances are controlled, tamped-down. The action takes place amid eye-catching décors and anachronistic furnishings. The scripts offer a winking catalogue of inside movie references, and the soundtracks are replete with a carefully curated collection of recordings, heavy on British Invasion classics. Anderson frames his images simply; their straightforward precision betrays a skeptical, comic edge and a zone of reserve. His emotional investment in his characters is offset by engaging antics that deflect bathos and refine dark and painful doings to a single, sharp point. “I like to do things that are a little surrealistic but with characters who are real,” he told me. “So that, even if things are a little unusual, the emotions will come through anyway.”



If his first two films and the one that followed in 2001, “The Royal Tenenbaums,” suggested the work of an extraordinarily sensitive and sophisticated hothouse talent, Anderson’s two subsequent films, “The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou” (2004) and “The Darjeeling Limited” (2007)—both of which were shot on location, under challenging conditions, one at sea in a Second World War-era minesweeper and the other on a moving train in India—revealed a more intrepid aspect of his nature. In these movies, Anderson emerged as an heir to the likes of Ernest Hemingway and Howard Hawks, rugged adventurers whose daring exploits were matched by their dandyish style statements. (Louis Vuitton made luggage for Hemingway, and *Vanity Fair* issued a paper doll of him, with a variety of outfits; Hawks, a pioneering pilot and racecar driver, was equally renowned for his game of croquet.) Anderson shares their self-discipline; their coolness under pressure; their appreciation of the exacting work ethic behind the beauty of objects; and their physical joy in the presence of danger.

Anjelica Huston, who met Anderson after seeing “Bottle Rocket” (and then appeared in three of his movies), found him to be “very courtly and proper.” He "had that old-fashioned deportment," yet had infused the movie with a kind of energy and a "rogue presence" that she hadn't seen "since the old movies with Jack"—Nicholson—"and Dennis Hopper." Cate Blanchett, who appeared in "The Life Aquatic," said of Anderson, "Is he Dorian Gray, I wonder? He is from another time, but it's completely and utterly genuine."

In short, Anderson resembles his films, a fact that, he knows, has played a role in their success. "In the course of doing these first few movies, I found a way that felt instinctively right for me, and I didn't feel constrained," he told me. "The end result is that they're very personal movies in a way that some people really connect with." Anderson's idiosyncrasies, personal and artistic, resonated from the start with a certain segment of the population: hipsters—young bourgeois bohemians—who came of age with the Internet and took from it both a trendsetting attunement to pop culture and a chance to make quick money while remaining artists at heart. A generation born of a paradox, its members recognized themselves in the romantic ironies of Anderson's movies, as well as in his embrace of the expressive power of luxury objects. Robert Lanham, in "The Hipster Handbook," a 2002 comic sociological portrait of the new urban youth culture, says that "'Rushmore' defined Wes Anderson as the quintessential Hipster director for today's savvy filmgoer," and puts him near the top of the list of "Celebrities Hipsters Have Crushes On," right behind Beck and Edward Norton. In 2004, *Gothamist* called Anderson "the anointed hipster auteur," and Elbert Ventura, writing in *Slate* earlier this year, claimed, "These days, the Tarantino imitators have been replaced by the Wes wannabes. A popular strain in recent American indie cinema has been the Andersonian quirkfest, a tendency that runs through movies like 'Juno,' 'Napoleon Dynamite,' 'Son of Rambow,' 'Charlie Bartlett,' and 'Garden State,' among others."

Still, the acclaim that greeted "Rushmore" and "The Royal Tenenbaums" didn't carry over to "The Life Aquatic," which was a critical and a box-office disaster; "The Darjeeling Limited" received mixed reviews and did not attract large audiences in the United States. Over a drink at Le Select, in Paris, Anderson admitted that he was troubled by the reception of "Darjeeling," especially in light of the success, the following year, of Danny Boyle's "Slumdog Millionaire." "Why did this India movie become a big hit and mine didn't?" he said. He answered his own question: "With my style, I can take a subject that you'd think would be commercial and turn it into something that not a lot of people want to see."

Anderson is acutely aware that a lot depends on the reception of "Fantastic Mr. Fox." It is, by his standards, an expensive movie. (He puts its budget at forty million.) To be a commercial success, it will have to appeal to young people, many of them, and the question that Anderson raised on the phone with his editor—about finding the right tone for the ending—is of great importance, both for him and for Fox Filmed Entertainment. Tom Rothman, the company's co-chairman, said the studio knew all along that it had an unusual project on its hands. "The trick," he told me, "is, from the business side, to try to be fiscally responsible so you can be creatively reckless. If it cost what 'Ice Age 3' did"—an estimated ninety million dollars—"it would have to be more conventional."

In early May, Anderson and his girlfriend, Juman Malouf, a writer and costume designer, took the Eurostar to London, so that Anderson could work with Bill Murray in a recording studio and visit the set where the movie was being shot. (The two men were also making a promotional video for the movie.) Murray was nominated for a Golden Globe for his supporting role in "Rushmore," and has appeared in all of Anderson's subsequent movies. In "Fantastic Mr. Fox," he lends his voice to the badger who is Mr. Fox's lawyer.

I joined them at 3 Mills Studio, which occupies the rustic site of a group of tidal mills that were up and running in the Middle Ages and continued to function until the nineteen-forties. Its restored buildings, with their distinctive squat and pointy towers, are situated on an island in the river and are closely watched by security guards. (When I got lost walking toward the set, the disembodied voice of a guard who had been keeping tabs on me by remote camera gave me directions.) The studio's expanse was subdivided by walls of black cloth running from the floor almost to the ceiling, thirty-five or forty feet high. The vividly decorated sets—depicting farmhouses, factories, a supermarket, fields, and even a three-dimensional twenty-foot-long city (based on a street in Bath)—would have been the dollhouses and dioramas of a child's most extravagant fantasies, were they not surrounded by a highly focussed horde of more than a hundred animators and crew members.

Though silence didn't prevail in the studio—it was not a sound stage, since the voices had been prerecorded—quiet did. The business of moving the figurines—which the crew call "puppets"—and the cameras with them, requires surgical concentration. Anderson spoke with the animators, set dressers, camera crew, and production associates. On one set, a computer screen played a video of him miming the gestures that a figurine was to be given. On another, he decided that the head of a fox looked different from the one that he had seen earlier and called for it to be replaced. As Anderson fussed over the details, the unifying principle of his design became clear: to imbue the artifice of stop-motion animation with a strong air of reality.

Anderson wanted the figurines to have "a believable sort of finish, a lifelike quality," according to Andy Gent, the puppet master. Although the largest of the figurines were only about eighteen inches tall, their fur was, indeed, fur (which, Gent said, came from "safe sources," such as "food production"). They had been crafted for maximum pliability of expression: Mr. Fox's eyes were poseable, and his foam-latex face had a jointed framework that could register the slightest sneer or snarl or raised eyebrow. Moreover, the figurines had tailored clothing, made with fabric. (Anderson designed the clothes himself, having his own tailor send fabric samples. He has a suit made from the same corduroy as Mr. Fox's.) In closeup, not only are the buttons on Mr. Fox's white shirt visible; so is the stitching at the edge of the collar.

Molly Cooper, the film's co-producer, told me, "Wes wants the references to be from the real world. A desk actually has a coffee stain, piles of papers, things you'd have in a real-world setting." Standing before the set of the supermarket, which is filled with hundreds of miniature boxes and cans and bottles and jars, Anderson told Dawson, "Stores don't put bread in the refrigerator." Dawson joked, "Here they do," and Anderson responded, "I'm saying a serious thing. Maybe we shouldn't have bread in the refrigerator." Another set featured a miniature piano, whose keys could be depressed individually, so that, when a figurine played, the motions matched those of the real performance being heard on the soundtrack. The walls of one character's office were lined with tiny cards that Anderson had based on the scheduling board in the film's production office. On his computer, he'd shown me a still frame of that set and said, gleefully, "Those pushpins, you wouldn't believe how small they are."

While at 3 Mills, however, Anderson spent less time on the sets than he did sitting in a large, sparsely furnished office filled with screens and computers, where Weisblum was editing. At one point, he had fifteen or twenty seconds of quiet time while waiting for Weisblum, who had stepped out, and he deadpanned, "Now what do I do?" Weisblum returned and, detecting the quiet, spoke of "a moment of Zen contemplation." Anderson replied, "Sometimes that happens in the apartment—'What am I supposed to do now?' "

Anderson was born in 1969 in Houston, where his father, who is now retired, ran an advertising and public-relations company and was also a writer. His mother, who studied art, had a Ph.D. in anthropology and worked as an archeologist. (She is now a real-estate agent.) His parents divorced when he was eight; Wes, his older brother, Mel (now a doctor), and his younger brother, Eric (a writer and artist whose paintings and designs have graced several of Anderson's films), lived with their mother, who often took them along on archeological digs (which Anderson re-created in "The Royal Tenenbaums"). At home, the three brothers undertook explorations of their own, building hideouts, digging pits, and searching for arrowheads. When they couldn't have real adventures, they made them up.

In elementary school, Anderson loved to watch movies; his favorite was "Star Wars," and then, with the arrival of home video, an Alfred Hitchcock boxed set. Watching Hitchcock movies, Anderson said, he understood for the first time the role of a director—as the "guy whose thing is making images and sounds to tell the story." When he was about ten, he got hold of his father's Super-8 movie camera and, together with Mel, made a series of silent films, recruiting neighborhood kids for on-the-spot performances. The movies included "a study in a murder," Eric recalled. "The steps leading up to a murder, the murder itself, the aftermath, things like that. Very visceral moment-to-moment storytelling. They weren't that violent, but they were stylishly violent."

Already as a youth, Anderson was an aesthete; he assembled his own library of carefully selected editions, had what Eric calls "a cutting-edge record collection," and covered the walls of his room with his own graphic art and collages. He was a big reader, who, in high school, loved F. Scott Fitzgerald's short stories, notably "The Captured Shadow," about the efforts of a romantic fifteen-year-old, Basil Lee, to stage his own play at his prep school (as the hero of "Rushmore" later would). He was also an athlete; he played soccer and tennis and ran track. After the eighth grade, Anderson, who had graduated from a private day school, moved, somewhat unhappily, to a public high school, where he continued to flaunt his private-school blazer (another experience that he dramatized in "Rushmore"). Later, he transferred to the august, traditional St. John's Academy, where much of "Rushmore" was filmed.

As an undergraduate at the University of Texas at Austin, where he majored in philosophy, Anderson remained movie-obsessed, working part time as a projectionist. (His conversation is liberally seasoned with film references, from John Ford's 1935 comedy "The Whole Town's Talking" to Jean-Pierre Melville and Jean Cocteau's "Les Enfants Terribles," which, he argues, marked the beginning of the French New Wave.) In Austin, Anderson met Owen Wilson, an English major, in a playwriting class. Wilson noticed Anderson sitting by himself, away from the table where the other students gathered, wearing "L.L. Bean boots with long corduroy-type shorts." For the class, Anderson had written a play titled "A Night in Tunisia," which he calls an imitation of Sam Shepard's 1981 play "True West." When it was staged, Anderson cast Wilson, a non-actor, in a leading role. The two became roommates, and Anderson asked Wilson to work with him on a script for a feature film. After Anderson graduated (Wilson didn't), they rented an apartment in Dallas, Wilson's home town, together with Wilson's two brothers, Luke and Andrew. "I don't remember doing anything for money," Anderson told me. "I don't remember having any money." Andrew, who worked for his father in advertising, paid the rent, which was about three hundred and fifty dollars a month.

Under the influence of the kind of realistic modern film noirs they loved, especially Scorsese's "Mean Streets," Anderson and Wilson outlined the script for a hard-nosed drama about a trio of young men—a controlling ringleader, a dreamy follower, and a put-upon slacker in need of respect—who turn, under the ringleader's delusional influence, to crime. Anderson planned to make "Bottle Rocket" as a low-budget feature; he cast Owen Wilson in the lead role, Luke Wilson as the follower, and their friend Bob Musgrave, a blues guitarist whom Owen had met in a bar, as the beleaguered one. By the time Anderson set out to shoot the movie—with borrowed equipment and a volunteer crew—he and Owen had had a revelation: they recognized, according to Anderson, that the cast was "in no way realistic as a group of criminals," and that the film was actually a comedy and "more about our own lives."

Anderson filmed the opening scenes of the script—which was all he could afford to shoot—and submitted them, as a short film, to the 1993 Sundance Film Festival. The short came to the attention of James L. Brooks, who had a contract with Columbia Pictures that allowed him to produce a low-budget film. He told Anderson and Wilson that he wanted to help make their movie. Later that year, Wilson and Anderson, who was twenty-four, moved to Los Angeles, where Brooks mentored them as they rewrote, shot, and edited the movie. Brooks had a lot of mentoring to do. Anderson

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told me that he considered the movie a "fable" and that he and Owen had filled it with "things we've seen in movies that we like." As a result, he said, "it became a sort of choreographed thing. There were more comic set pieces, and other parts were just personal, from our own experience, and the movie took shape in a way that wasn't realistic. That made me free to say that the details can really be anything that feels right." Brooks taught Anderson and Wilson how to pull their "details" together into a coherent script, and how to anticipate the way a film will be perceived by viewers. Nonetheless, the release of "Bottle Rocket," in February, 1996, was calamitous. Sundance, which had shown the short, rejected the feature. It took in less than a million dollars at the box office.

Still, it appealed to Joe Roth, at Disney, and he agreed to produce Anderson's next film. With Wilson—who had got favorable reviews for his performance in "Bottle Rocket" and had begun to audition for other parts—Anderson wrote the story of Max Fischer, an intellectually ambitious sophomore at a tony private school, Rushmore Academy, who neglects his studies in favor of a dizzying array of extracurricular achievements—the most important of which is writing and directing grandiose plays based on such seventies movie classics as "Serpico" and "Apocalypse Now." Expelled from the academy, Max lands in a public high school.

The modest practical outcome of "Bottle Rocket" may actually have helped Anderson in making "Rushmore"; he had little reputation to live up to and no sophomore jinx to skirt, and he now had both the resources and the experience to develop the tone of his first film. Anderson needed a unique actor to play Max, and was deep into a fruitless casting process when seventeen-year-old Jason Schwartzman turned up at an audition. Schwartzman had never acted before—though his mother is the actress Talia Shire, and Francis Ford Coppola is his uncle—but the screenplay excited him. "Everything that I'd ever found funny existed in one script," he said. Anderson knew at once that he wanted Schwartzman in the role, and he spent a great deal of time coaching him through the shoot. "Literally, we would have dinner every night in his room and go over the scene," Schwartzman said. "There didn't seem to be much separation between a working day and a personal day. It was just one big day together."

To play Herman Blume, a businessman who becomes Max's benefactor and his rival for a young widow who teaches at Rushmore, Anderson recruited an actor he considered to be a comic genius, Bill Murray, who hadn't done much of note since "Groundhog Day," a few years earlier. "The script was so precisely written, you could tell that this guy knew exactly what he was doing; you knew exactly what he wanted to make, exactly how he wanted each scene to go," Murray told Charlie Rose in 1999. Murray took only a small salary, and even wrote Anderson a check (for about twenty-five thousand dollars) to cover a complex shot that the studio wouldn't pay for. Anderson got Murray to channel his outrageous sense of humor into low-key wit and contemplative bewilderment, in a performance that was a perfect match for the italicized delivery that Anderson elicited from Schwartzman.

Working with a budget much larger than that of "Bottle Rocket," Anderson was able to exercise greater control over the film's physical environment—décor, costumes, setting—and achieve more expressive results with the camera. "Rushmore" was greeted with near-universal acclaim. Schwartzman, thanks to a performance that marked a generational shift for teens in movies, became an overnight star; Murray was reclassified as an artist; and Anderson was praised for his tender yet unsparing view of his dandyish, geeky hero, a headstrong romantic who learns to face reality.

By this time, Anderson had moved to New York, where he collaborated long-distance with Wilson—who was working steadily as an actor in Los Angeles—on the script for his third film, "The Royal Tenenbaums." The story (which, like its title, recalls Orson Welles's "The Magnificent Ambersons" and George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber's play "The Royal Family") portrays three child prodigies (Ben Stiller, Luke Wilson, and Gwyneth Paltrow), raised by their archeologist mother, who return to her home as prematurely burned-out adults. The patriarch, Royal Tenenbaum (Gene Hackman), had little presence in his children's youth. Late in life, he returns to the family homestead, to get to know his grown children, and to win back his wife (Anjelica Huston). The film is set in an idealized Manhattan, reminiscent of the one depicted in J. D. Salinger's Glass family saga, in the kind of palatial urban villa that exists only in movies, but which, in fact, Anderson found at the corner of West 144th

Street and Convent Avenue, in Harlem, and renovated to his specifications.

"Tenenbaums" is a dark story, turning on drug use, a plane crash, a suicide attempt, racial provocations, fatal illness, and a quasi-incestuous bond between a brother and his adopted sister. Anderson sharply delineates family relations and the deep-rooted resentments that form—and deform—our lives. Yet he undercuts the melodrama with outlandish costumes, exaggerated décor, and witty dialogue—blithe touches that set up a contrast between haut-bourgeois trappings and long-stifled pain. Released in 2001, the film was Anderson's first commercial hit, earning him and Wilson an Oscar nomination for best original screenplay.

In 2000, Anderson began work on a fictional homage to Jacques Cousteau, based on a brief sketch that he had written in college. He wrote "The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou" with his friend the screenwriter and director Noah Baumbach (who is also a contributor to *The New Yorker*). To collaborate on the script, the pair met daily at Bar Pitti, in the West Village, for a late lunch and stayed through dinner, talking, while Anderson occasionally took notes. "I don't think we ever sat in front of a computer," Baumbach said. "It was an extension of what our friendship had been. We were getting together anyway—why not turn it into something?"

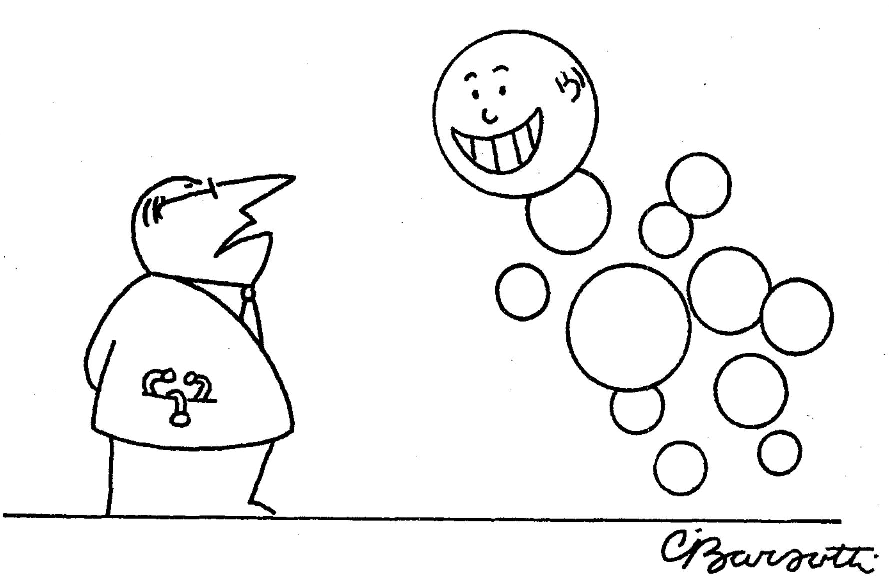
Anderson and Baumbach watched other movies for inspiration, including "Day of the Dolphin," "Local Hero," and "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre." They saw Louis Malle's "Murmur of the Heart," in part because Malle had worked with Cousteau in the nineteen-fifties. They also took from French New Wave films, Baumbach said, an open-ended way of constructing the movie: "Let's put in things that the director likes and connects to, and people he likes and connects to, and make a movie out of it." The story they worked out brought together elements of "8½," "Moby-Dick," and Howard Hawks's "Red River."

"The Life Aquatic" begins at a première, where a Jacques Cousteau-like filmmaker named Steve Zissou (Bill Murray) presents his latest documentary—a grim piece showing the attack, by a "jaguar shark," that left his best friend dead—to a dubious audience. Strapped for funds and short of materiel, Zissou nonetheless decides to embark on a daredevil hunt for the monstrous creature and seeks the help of his estranged wife, Eleanor (Anjelica Huston). A crucial subplot involves Zissou's encounter with his putative son, Ned Plimpton (Owen Wilson), who joins the crew. Zissou and Plimpton both fall in love with a journalist (Cate Blanchett) who comes along on the journey.

The subject of the movie is an immense film production, requiring boats, cameras, undersea equipment, a helicopter, a huge crew, and endless cash. Anderson was undertaking the very same thing. First, he needed a boat, and, as the production designer Mark Friedberg told the Writing Studio, "Wes was very particular about what type of boat he wanted—that it needed to be of World War II vintage, that it needed to be a minesweeper, that it had to be about fifty metres, and, to some degree, that it would be reminiscent of Cousteau's Calypso." As much as possible, Anderson avoided simulations. The scenes in a helicopter were, in fact, filmed in a helicopter. The action scripted to take place aboard ship took place at sea. The actors playing Zissou's crew actually swam underwater (albeit in a vast studio tank), for which they endured protracted scuba training. Soon after the shoot, Murray called it "by far the most physically demanding, the most emotionally demanding, both personally and professionally," that he had ever done. Huston told me that Anderson maintained a serenely determined demeanor throughout the stress of the shoot. "If I were to take one isolated vision of Wes," she said, "it's in a boat, a rather small motorboat, opposite my motorboat, in choppy seas, foggy, cold, with a megaphone, telling me when to stand up and wave. He was like Captain Ahab on that movie, and it's such a funny thing to me, because you think of Wes as being effete, toothpick-thin, a little bit languid and pale, and concave, but I have these incredibly bravura, muscular images of him out at sea. Wes, if he needed it for his movie, would hang upside down from a line over the Pyrénées."

As he had done in his earlier films, Anderson leavened the drama of the story with irony and stylization. He included animated rainbow-colored sea creatures. He oversaw the construction, at Cinecittà, of a huge cutaway set showing a cross-section of the ship—an ant-farm-like vision that resembled legendary sets from Jerry Lewis's "The Ladies Man" and Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin's "Tout Va Bien"—and filmed it in a pair of astonishing crane shots. The furnishings and costumes were chosen with care—including Team Zissou's light-blue nautical suits with a dark-blue racing stripe and red ski caps—to highlight the childlike earnestness of their quasi-martial esprit de corps.

"The Life Aquatic" was more audacious and extravagant than Anderson's previous films, but it lost money and faced a critical backlash. Anthony Lane in this magazine, and A. O. Scott in the *Times*, were among the few who praised the

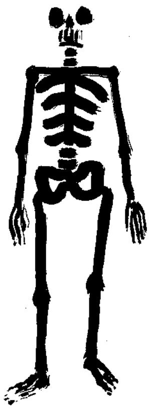


"Yes, everything—I need a list of all the medications you're on."

movie. The harshest rejections, however, came not from film critics but from cultural critics. Writing in the journal *n+1*, Christian Lorentzen, in a piece called "Captain Neato: Wes Anderson and the Problem with Hipsters; Or, What Happens When a Generation Refuses to Grow Up," claimed that the "failure" of "The Life Aquatic" reflected the end of "the Age of Twee in hipsterdom." Matthew Wilder, writing in *City Pages*, derided the movie as "a silo stuffed with a haut-bourgeois 12-year-old kid's fetish objects" and dreamed of a Maileresque "Big Bruiser" who would teach Anderson (and several other artists of his generation) "art-making . . . as high-wire act, fire-eating contest, bare-knuckle barroom brawl." These writers were put off, according to Lorentzen, by what they saw as Anderson's "determined hostility to storytelling, conscious rejection of an art the auteur had almost mastered." For Wilder, "The Life Aquatic" found Anderson "never mastering the rhythm or even the plastic elements of a satisfying tale." Michael Hirschorn, in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 2007, lamented the rise of "quirk" and complained that "The Life Aquatic" was "filled with off-kilter gestures, gorgeous moments, and little narrative thrust."

In fact, "The Life Aquatic" does tell a story, but it's one that sprawls with an epic ambition and a picaresque wonder. Anderson's playfully unstrung storytelling was both purposeful and meaningful: life in the wild, the film suggests, doesn't follow the neat contours of dramatic suspense but is filled with surprises, accidents, and sudden lurches off course. The film's arch stylization adds mood, metaphor, and humor to its realistic aspects. But Anderson was aware that he ran the risk of confounding the public's expectations. He told me, "With 'Life Aquatic,' people argued that the whole movie should either be shot on a stage and we should embrace the artificial aspect of it, or it should be real. 'If you're gonna chop a boat in half down the middle, then how can you have them then go on the real boat on the real water?' And I just felt like, 'Because we want both. I want to shoot some things that are noticeably artificial and, at the same time, have dramatic scenes on the deck of a real ship. I want to be on the real sea, stuck out there with a company of actors experiencing all the absolute nightmares that you have when you try to shoot at sea.' " He was aware, he said, that his blend of reality and artifice "ends up being a combination that is not quite one thing or the other, but is its own thing."

"The Life Aquatic" was proof of Anderson's maturation as an artist, but it fell outside the norms of popular moviemaking; he made a sixty-million-dollar art film, which was marketed to a general audience, and he paid the price at the box office and with the critics. If "The Life Aquatic" also cost Anderson some of his hipster acolytes, it wasn't only because of its uneasy straddling of genres. The film is bleaker than Anderson's earlier movies, its message far less reassuring. The young people at the center of "Rushmore" and "The Royal Tenenbaums" benefit, in the end, from the wisdom of elders who love them. In "The Life Aquatic," the wisdom of Steve Zissou is invested only in his movies, the making of which costs Plimpton his life. Anderson's bitter paean to the destructive yet redemptive power of cinema may be comforting to *cinéastes*, but it offers little hope to anyone else.



In 2005, Jason Schwartzman was in Paris, playing Louis XVI in Sofia Coppola's film "Marie Antoinette." Anderson was there for the final days of a short publicity tour for "The Life Aquatic." Schwartzman invited him to share his apartment, and Anderson stayed for two months. "We were like a married couple," Schwartzman said. "We'd go shopping together, buy food together," all the while talking about their lives, their work, their "histories and feelings about the future." Along with another friend in Paris, Roman Coppola—who had been Anderson's second-unit director on "The Life Aquatic" and was now fulfilling the same function for his sister Sofia on "Marie Antoinette"—they started to work on a new script. Schwartzman recalled, "Wes said, 'I think we should write a movie about three brothers in India. That's kind of all I have now, but the three of us will get together every night and we'll tell our stories. It will be the most personal thing we could possibly make—let's try to make it even *too* personal.' "

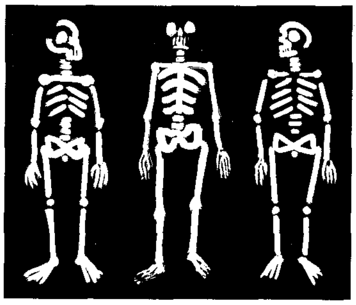
Anderson rented an apartment of his own in Paris. "I started going to the movies in the Latin Quarter, and developed a catalogue of restaurants," he said. He shot "Hotel Chevalier," a short film with Schwartzman and Natalie Portman in a plush hotel room, which would ultimately serve as a prologue to, and backstory for, "The Darjeeling Limited." (He also shot—and starred in—a now legendary commercial for American Express, based on François Truffaut's "Day for Night.") Then, in March, 2006, joined by Coppola, Schwartzman, and Waris Ahluwalia, an old friend who had appeared in "The Life Aquatic" and whose family is from Punjab, he went to India to scout locations, write, and "get into situations to see what would happen." In preparation, he watched Louis Malle's seven-part documentary series, "Phantom India," films by Satyajit Ray, and Jean Renoir's 1951 Anglo-Indian drama set on the Ganges, "The River." Another prime influence, he said, was John Cassavetes's "Husbands," in which three men grieving over a friend take off on a trip. "They're all on the cusp or in the middle of some kind of meltdown," Anderson said. "Jason, Roman, and I watched 'Husbands' together, and we really felt connected to it."

"The Darjeeling Limited," too, revolves around grief: its main characters are three brothers, who meet in India for a journey of reconciliation a year after their father's death. Anderson gave them the names Francis, Jack, and Peter—as in Coppola, Nicholson, and Bogdanovich—and something of the personae of these icons filters into the performances of the three lead actors, Owen Wilson, Schwartzman, and Adrien Brody. In India, the three young men's "spiritual journey," as Francis calls it, turns intensely physical. They have entered a land where death is a prominent part of life, and, though they actually learn little of India—they are too busy working out their personal problems—they are deeply shaken and definitively changed by the experience nonetheless. Still in mourning for their father, the brothers are even more desperate for their absent mother, whose refuge in a remote convent in the foothills of the Himalayas turns out to be the destination of their journey. Yet, as ever, Anderson prevents the characters' teeming emotional life from spilling over; he brings it out gradually, in poignant touches, and condenses much of it into a remarkable material world of his own design. The set of suitcases that the three brothers schlep throughout India (made by Marc Jacobs for Louis Vuitton, with animal intaglios from drawings by Anderson's brother Eric) are so vivid as almost to become characters themselves, while serving as a symbol—obvious, yet potent—of their owners' emotional baggage. (Anderson insisted that the luggage actually be heavily packed with possessions befitting the characters.)

The script's freewheeling, intimate tone was matched by the method of production. Schwartzman said, "Wes not only pitched a rough idea for a movie, he also pitched a rough idea of how he'd like to make the movie, which was: 'I want to do a movie with no trailers; all the actors do their own makeup; we shoot it in the streets, without blocking off streets. I don't want it to be a big production. I don't want actors wandering away and sitting in their trailers for thirty minutes. I want everyone to stay on set.' And he made the movie like that. Our suits were pre-wired with our microphones in them; actors did their own hair and makeup." Anderson rented an Indian train (which was completely redone, in a highly ornamented style, for the shoot), and got permission from the government to film while running it on public tracks. But much of the shoot took place outside the train, in the streets and public spaces of India, without crowd control. "People always ask if we were improvising in the movie," Schwartzman said. "There was no improvisation, but when we were shooting on real live streets our bodies were improvising. We'd be walking down the street saying the same lines, but in Take Five a woman walks by holding food, so we'd have to move and make way for her while we were talking. We were just mixed in with life."

Because of its setting, "The Darjeeling Limited" aroused some debate on ethnic issues. In *Slate*, Jonah Weiner wrote that the film "showcases an obnoxious element of Anderson that is rarely discussed: the clumsy, discomfiting way he stages interactions between white protagonists—typically upper-class élites—and nonwhite foils—typically working-class and poor." In particular, Weiner argued that a scene in which an Indian boy drowns "isn't just heavy-handed, it's offensive. In a grisly little bit of developing-world outsourcing, the child does the bothersome work of dying so that the American heroes won't have to die spiritually." The charge was trumped-up—the accident is entirely plausible, the brothers' response to it humble—but, for Weiner and other writers, it recalled questions that had come up in reference to scenes in earlier Anderson movies, such as Max Fischer's mangling of an Asian girl's name, in "Rushmore"; Royal Tenenbaum's race-baiting of his wife's suitor, played (eloquently) by Danny Glover; and the jokey depiction of Royal's sidekick, an Indian man, played by Anderson's friend Kumar Pallana (who has appeared in four of his films), who is incongruously named Pagoda. In an e-mail, Anderson explained, "These are supposed to be jokes, and the joke is meant to be on the person who gets it wrong. That's kind of obvious, though, isn't it?" One writer who seems to have got the joke responded with one of his own: in early 2008, Christian Lander put Anderson's movies tenth on a long list of "Stuff White People Like"—behind organic food and Barack Obama, but ahead of yoga, microbreweries, and "The Colbert Report."

The response to "The Darjeeling Limited" does serve as a reminder of the absence of real-world politics in Anderson's movies. His filming in Asia shows no trace of the two wars that the United States was embroiled in nearby. He explained to me that he wanted his movies to feel "like they were made some time ago, like they weren't necessarily dated," but that he doesn't think this approach makes them apolitical. "The politics in them is the politics among the characters," he said. "The thing I've been thinking about lately is less about how to get more Costa-Gavras into my movies and more about how to get the politics of a movie like 'Dune' "—by David Lynch—"where the politics have been created for the story. It can deepen the fantasy of the movie if there are political layers to the society that you've invented."



By the time "The Darjeeling Limited" was released, in 2007, Anderson was already working on his next project. Roald Dahl's "Fantastic Mr. Fox" is the first book that Anderson remembers owning. (Owen Wilson told me that he was still talking about Dahl in college.) Dahl's book is short; Anderson knew that to turn it into a feature film he would have to stretch it. He said that he and Baumbach, his co-writer, gave the story "first and third chapters," treating the book itself as the second. They amplified the characters' relationships, as well as their conflicts, invented new characters, and gave names, identities, and backstories to the characters who, in the book, are merely sketched in action. The result is not just a longer narrative but also an expanded emotional spectrum. For instance, Mr. and Mrs. Fox (who are voiced by George Clooney and Meryl Streep) bring to life a view of marriage—of a couple whose extraordinary complicity is threatened by ambition—that's as bittersweet and insightful as that of any live-action romantic movie of recent years. Anderson, whose understanding of childhood is one of the hallmarks of his art—a point of similarity with Truffaut—builds another axis of drama by giving the Foxes a nephew, a gallant young athlete, and setting him up as a rival to their more idiosyncratic son. Anderson and Baumbach, who wrote part of the script in Dahl's house, also sought to root it in Dahl's life. The farmer Mr. Bean and his wife derived some of their attributes from Dahl and his widow. Bean's house is similar to Dahl's, and the fox runs and the tree where much of the action takes place resemble those in Dahl's garden.

For stop-motion animation, the actors' voices must be recorded in advance, so that the figurines' mouths can be moved in synch with the dialogue. The recording is usually done in a sound studio. Anderson did things differently. In the fall of 2007, he took a handful of actors, including Clooney and Murray, to a friend's farm in Connecticut. In order to make the voices and the film's soundscape realistic, Anderson had his actors perform the motions—running, digging, and climbing—that the figurines would perform; he recorded the exterior scenes in the fields, and the interiors in the farmhouse.

Anderson's direction, with its protracted long takes and tight closeups, treats the figurines like actors, emphasizing their "performances." The production designer, Nelson Lowry, told me that Anderson's approach to animation was "very counterintuitive." He made, Lowry added, "unconventional choices, such as keeping characters still. Usually, animators keep characters constantly in motion; if they're doing nothing, they blink." Lowry calls Anderson's expressive stillness a "compression of character."

"Fantastic Mr. Fox" offers a dazzling profusion of visual detail, across the height and width of the frame, which repays—even requires—multiple viewings. From the beginning of his career, Anderson has taken pleasure in filling his films with anachronistic tchotchkes similar to the ones that have pride of place in his home. His films are living tributes to the analogue age, with their black-and-white televisions, obsolete office equipment, and hulking electrical devices. "Fantastic Mr. Fox," for which plausibility is not a problem—talking animals, after all—is replete with them, from the Dictaphone and the typewriter in the law office to a seventies-style bicycle with a banana seat. And it's in "Fantastic Mr. Fox" that the point of these objects, their essential place in Anderson's world view, becomes apparent. "I wanted to make a children's movie like some of the ones I grew up with," he told me. "And that went with the idea of how you didn't have to wear helmets when you rode bicycles. I never wore a helmet riding a bicycle, and, in a way, the movie is for children who don't wear helmets when they ride bicycles. Maybe that sounds terrible. I support children wearing helmets on their bicycles—there's just a certain nostalgia for when they didn't. For when we didn't."

In "Fantastic Mr. Fox," Anderson evokes a nostalgia for risk, for danger faced with an unspoken courage and audacity. This nostalgia was the indirect subject of discussions between Anderson and executives at Fox. The results of two secret test screenings held in the New York area, in April, were said to be favorable, but the studio requested that Anderson make some changes to align the film with more conventional children's movies—getting rid of the cigarettes (smoked by villains), for instance, and what Anderson calls "occasional blood, but nothing horrible." Anderson did not make the changes. In the tacit bargain that followed, Anderson, who usually takes an active role in the marketing of his films, agreed to trust the studio's expertise in the field. When Fox released a trailer for "Fantastic Mr. Fox," in July, many of Anderson's fans were surprised to discover that it contained neither his name nor Roald Dahl's. (According to Rothman, it was only the first of several trailers—the one destined for the widest audiences, and "aimed at a mother in New Jersey who's never been to an art house"—and was followed by another, for Anderson fans.)

Dahl's book ends with Mr. Fox and his family and friends hiding deep underground from the farmers who are awaiting the chance to kill them. Despite the depths of their isolation, however, Mr. Fox has found a steady source of food for them—the farmers' own storehouses:

> "And you know what this means?" said Mr. Fox. "*It means that none of us need ever go out into the open again!*"

Anderson changed the ending a little, based on something that he found in Dahl's manuscripts. The new version remains true to the writer's vision but adds Anderson's own philosophical twist: the animals, in their underground exile, don't merely subsist, they prosper; they are sheltered from the wild winds of nature and predators, while enjoying the pleasures and comforts that only human culture can offer. The ending, which Anderson had worried about from his desk in Paris, seems, in some ways, a celebration. The animals' adventure may have had a high cost, but, when all is said and done, they have come together as never before. They have achieved something utterly original, and, from the safety of their sanctuary, they are free to do still more. ♦

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Richard Brody on "The Darjeeling Limited."

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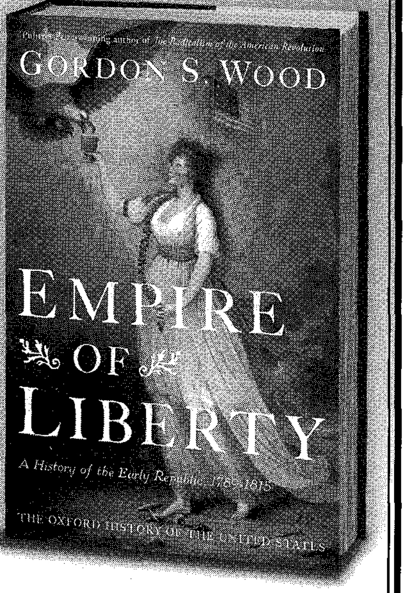
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REFLECTIONS

THE GOOD COOK

A battle against famine in North Korea.

BY BARBARA DEMICK

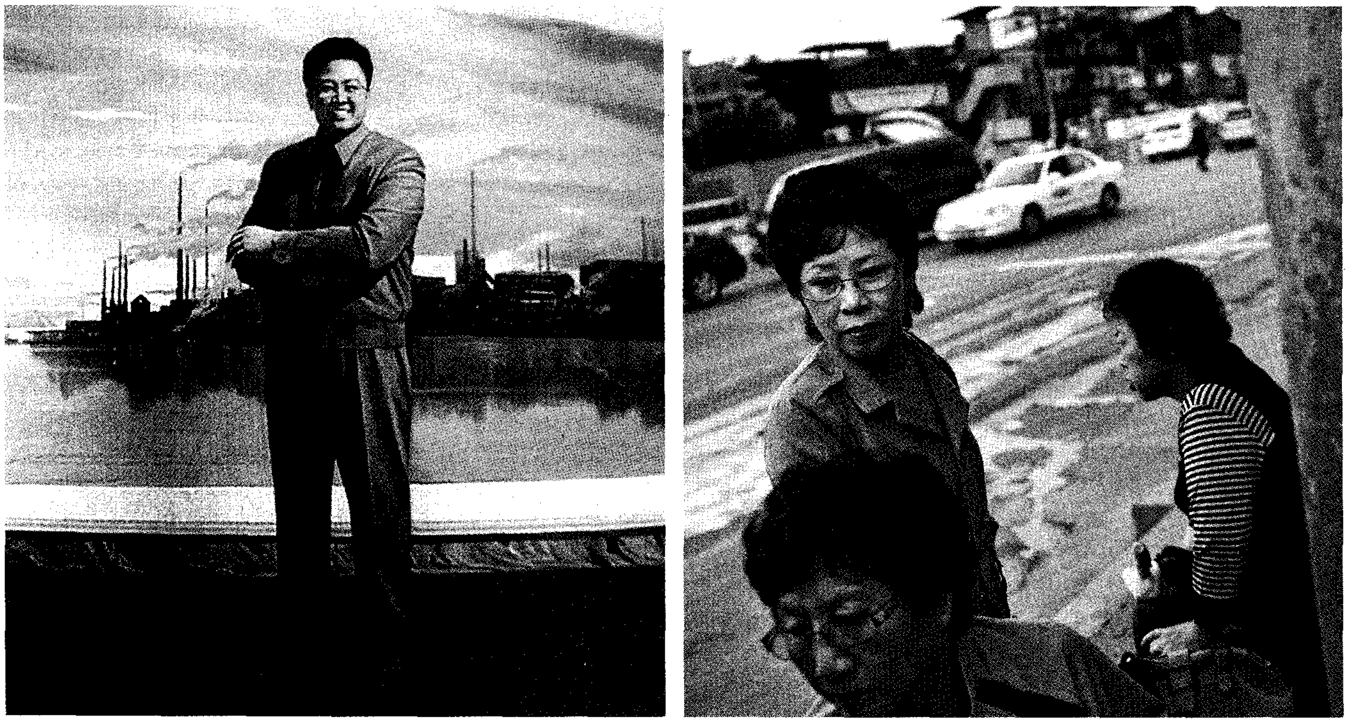
Song Hee-suk was a model citizen of North Korea. "I lived only for Marshal Kim Il-sung and for the fatherland," she said not long ago. "I never had a thought otherwise." Her enthusiasm for the regime made her sound like the heroine of a propaganda film, and she looked the part, too. She had a face as plump as a dumpling, which made her appear well fed even when she wasn't, and a bow-shaped mouth, which made her seem happy even when she was sad.

Mrs. Song raised four children while working ten-hour shifts, six days a week, at the day-care center of the Chosun Clothing Factory, in the coastal city of Chongjin, in North Hamgyong Province. An estimated twenty per cent of North Korean men were in the armed services, and women were needed to keep the factories going. Mrs. Song often went to work with a baby strapped to her back and with one or two other children dragging along behind her. The children spent their days in the day-care center. After work, Mrs. Song was required to participate in several hours of ideological training in the factory's auditorium. On Friday nights, she stayed late for self-criticism. In these sessions, members of her work unit would stand up and reveal to their colleagues anything that they had done wrong. Mrs. Song usually said that she feared she wasn't working hard enough. Mrs. Song was the head of her neighborhood group, and, when she wasn't at the factory, she was responsible for assigning communal chores and reporting activity that was inconsistent with North Korean doctrine.

I first met Mrs. Song (whose name has been changed here) in 2004. She was fifty-nine years old and had been living in Seoul, South Korea, for two years. She had been brought out of North Korea by her oldest daughter, Oak-hee, who had for years expressed open dislike for the regime and had, in March, 2002, managed to defect to South Korea. Mrs. Song told me that she had left North Korea only for her daughter and that she remained a true believer until the day she left. Even after three members of her family died of starvation—her husband, her mother-in-law, and her twenty-five-year-old son—Mrs. Song believed that North Korea was the greatest nation on earth. "I thought it was my fault that I couldn't provide for them," she said. "It never occurred to me that the government was at fault." Only later did she realize that it was "the kind and good-hearted people who did what they were told—they were the first to die."

Mrs. Song used to go twice a month to a food-distribution center near her apartment. With two plastic shopping bags, she stood in line outside an unmarked storefront until a big metal gate swung open at 10 A.M. Everybody had assigned days—Mrs. Song's were the third and the eighteenth—but there was often a wait of several hours to get to the door. Inside was a small, unheated room with white concrete walls and a cheerless woman sitting behind a table covered with ledger books. Mrs. Song would hand over her ration book, a small sum of money, and tickets from the garment factory certifying that she had fulfilled her work duty. The clerk would calculate her entitlements: seven hundred grams each per day for her and her husband, Chang-bo, a journalist working for the North Hamgyong radio station; three hundred grams for her mother-in-law (retired people got less); and four hundred for each school-age child living at home. If anybody in the family was away from home, Mrs. Song would tell the clerk, and the corresponding amount of rations was deducted. The clerk would then stamp receipts in triplicate, one of which she'd give to Mrs. Song. At the back of the warehouse, where vats of rice, corn, barley, and flour were stored, another clerk weighed out the rations and put them in Mrs. Song's plastic bags.

Cabbage for making kimchi was distributed in the autumn. Kimchi, spicy preserved cabbage, is the Korean national dish, and is made to last all winter. Mrs. Song says that each family got seventy kilograms (a hundred and fifty-four pounds) of cabbage per adult and fifty kilograms (a hundred and ten pounds) per child, which for her family came to four hundred and ten kilos. She would spend up to a week preparing kimchi. The cabbage was pickled with salt, spiced with red pepper, or sometimes with bean paste or baby shrimp, and then stored in tall earthenware jars. Chang-bo helped her carry the jars down to the basement of a warehouse next to their apartment building, where each family had a storage bin. The tradition was to bury kimchi pots in the garden, so that they would stay cold but would not freeze. But in the warehouse basement Mrs. Song and her husband simply packed dirt around the jars and put them in the storage bin, which they padlocked. Kimchi thieves were common in Chongjin.



Kim Jong-il said that "the food problem should be solved in a socialist way"; Song Hee-suk (center) lived only "for the fatherland."

LEFT: NICOLAS RIGHETTI/REZO; RIGHT: DAVID HOGSHOLT/REPORTAGE BY GETTY

Mrs. Song had three daughters, who used to boast that her kimchi was the best in the neighborhood. She enjoyed cooking almost as much as her husband enjoyed eating, and both of them fancied themselves gourmets. Her repertoire was naturally limited—North Koreans had no exposure to foreign cuisines—but North Korean cooks are creative. Whatever happens to be fresh and seasonal is mixed with rice, barley, or corn and spiced with red bean paste or chilies. The signature dish is *naengmyeon,* cold buckwheat noodles served in a broth with myriad regional variations that include hard-boiled eggs, cucumbers, or pears. If she was busy, Mrs. Song bought noodles from a shop; if not, she made them herself. During the holidays, using the limited ingredients from the public-distribution system, she would make *twigim,* batter-fried vegetables that were light and crisp. For her husband's birthday, she turned rice into a sweet glutinous cake called *deok.* She also made her own corn liquor.

Looking back years later, Mrs. Song couldn't pinpoint when her rations faded away—1989, 1990, 1991. She started waiting in line earlier, sometimes as early as 1 A.M. When the clerks handed her shopping bags back to her, they were lighter than they used to be, and she didn't need to peek inside to confirm her disappointment. Rice disappeared first. Cooking oil had always been only sporadically available, but now it was never in the bag. The state-supplied cabbage was no longer delivered, because there was no fuel for the trucks. Mrs. Song had to walk to a nearby farm, pick the cabbage, and cart it home in a wheelbarrow. She didn't complain. "If I made a fuss, they would have just come and taken me away," she told me later.

Subsidized food was supposed to be a crowning achievement of the North Korean system. Echoing the Republican Party's mantra during Herbert Hoover's 1928 Presidential campaign of "a chicken in every pot," North Korea's founder, Kim Il-sung, promised to feed the North Korean population with rice, coining the slogan "Rice Is Socialism" in the nineteen-fifties. Rice, especially white rice, had always been the favored food of Koreans, but North Korea is too cold and too mountainous to produce enough of it to sustain the population, and it remained a luxury. However, the public-distribution system, which was introduced in the Communist North shortly after the Korean peninsula was divided, in 1945, did supply a mixture of grains in amounts that were carefully allotted in accordance with rank and work status. On national holidays, such as the Kim-family birthdays, pork or dried fish might be distributed.

Kim Il-sung and his son Kim Jong-il, who by the nineteen-eighties was increasingly assuming his father's duties, offered "on-the-spot guidance" to address the country's problems. Father and son were experts in everything from geology to farming. One day, Kim Jong-il would decree that the country should switch from rice to potatoes as its primary staple food ("We have started to see the potato revolution as an ideological revolution," *Rodong Shinmun*, the official newspaper, reported); the next day, he would decide that the country should build ostrich farms.

Despite its rhetoric about self-sufficiency, North Korea was dependent on the generosity of its neighbors. Communist-bloc countries sold goods at preferential prices. The country got subsidized fuel oil, rice, fertilizer, pharmaceuticals, industrial equipment, trucks, and cars. Hospital equipment came from Czechoslovakia; subway carriages arrived from East Germany. Kim Il-sung skillfully played the Soviet Union and China against each other, using their rivalry to extract as much aid as possible. Like an old-style emperor, he received tribute from neighboring realms: Stalin sent an armored limousine; Mao sent a train carriage.

But by the early nineteen-nineties the Russians had grown impatient with North Korea's failure to repay its creditors an estimated ten billion dollars in loans. Moscow decided that North Korea would have to pay prevailing world prices for Soviet imports rather than the lower "friendship" prices. In the past, the Chinese, who provided three-quarters of North Korea's fuel and two-thirds of its food imports, used to say that the two countries were as close as "lips and teeth"; now they wanted cash up front.

Soon, a feedback loop of diminishing productivity was set in motion. Without cheap fuel oil and raw materials, North Korea couldn't keep the factories running, which meant that it had nothing to export. With no exports, there was no hard currency, and without hard currency fuel imports fell even further and the electricity supply dwindled. The coal mines couldn't operate, because they required electric pumps to siphon water. The shortage of coal further worsened the electricity shortage.

North Korea is the last place on earth where virtually all staple foods are grown on collective farms. The state confiscates the entire harvest and then gives a portion back to the farmers. It had never been easy to eke out enough from North Korea's hardscrabble terrain to feed a population of up to twenty-four million. The agricultural techniques developed to boost production relied on electrically powered irrigation systems and on chemical fertilizers and pesticides produced at factories that had been closed owing to a lack of fuel and raw materials. North Korea started running out of food, and as people went hungry they didn't have the energy to work.

"How am I supposed to think about consequences before they happen?"

As harvests withered in the early nineteen-nineties, the farmers, going hungry, began hoarding some of the crops. There were stories from the countryside of roofs that collapsed under the weight of grain hidden in the eaves. The farmers also neglected the collective fields for private "kitchen gardens," next to their houses, or small plots that they carved out of the side of uncultivated mountain slopes. Driving through the North Korean countryside, you could clearly see the contrast between the private gardens, bursting with vegetables—beanpoles soaring skyward, vines drooping with pumpkins—next to the collective fields with haphazard rows of stunted corn that had been planted by so-called "volunteers."

Enduring hunger became part of one's patriotic duty. Posters went up in the capital, Pyongyang, touting a new slogan, "Let's Eat Two Meals a Day." The North Korean government offered a variety of explanations. People were told that the government was stockpiling food to feed the starving South Korean masses on the blessed day of reunification, or that the United States had instituted a blockade against North Korea. North Korean television ran a documentary about a man whose stomach burst, it was claimed, from eating too much rice. In any case, the food shortage was temporary—agricultural officials quoted in the newspapers claimed that bumper crops of rice were expected in the next harvest.

The foreign press began reporting on North Korea's food shortages in the early nineteen-nineties, and in 1992 the country's news service issued an indignant reply:

> All people live a happy life without any worries about food in our land. The state supplies the people with food at a cheap price next to nothing so that people do not know how much rice costs. This is the reality of the northern half of Korea.

It has been said that people raised in Communist countries cannot fend for themselves, because they expect the government to take care of them. This was not true of many of the victims of the North Korean famine. When the public-distribution system was cut off, people tapped their deepest wells of creativity to feed themselves. They devised traps out of buckets and string to catch small animals in fields, and draped nets over their balconies to snare sparrows. They educated themselves in the nutritive properties of plants.

Women exchanged recipe tips: When making cornmeal, don't throw out the husk, cob, leaves, and stem of the corn—throw everything into the grinder. Even if it isn't nutritious, it is filling. Boil noodles for at least an hour, to make them appear bigger. Add a few leaves of grass to soup to make it look as if it contained vegetables. Women would strip the sweet inner bark of pine trees to grind into a fine powder that could be used in place of flour.

North Koreans picked kernels of undigested corn out of the excrement of farm animals. Shipyard workers developed a technique by which they scraped the bottoms of the cargo holds where food had been stored, then spread the foul-smelling gunk on the roof to dry so that they could collect from it tiny grains of uncooked rice and other edibles.

The gathering and production of food was the focus of all enterprise. You woke up early to find your breakfast, and as soon as it was finished you thought about what to find for dinner. You slept during lunchtime because you were exhausted.

By 1990, Mrs. Song's garment factory had run out of fabric. The workers spent their days cleaning, attending lectures, or participating in what their manager called "special projects." One day, they went to the railroad tracks to collect dog excrement to use as fertilizer; another day, they were marched to a beach next to a steel factory to look for bits of scrap metal. Finally, the manager summoned some of the employees.

Using a Korean word for "auntie," a common term for middle-aged married women, she said, "You *ajummas* should think about finding some other way to bring food home for your families."

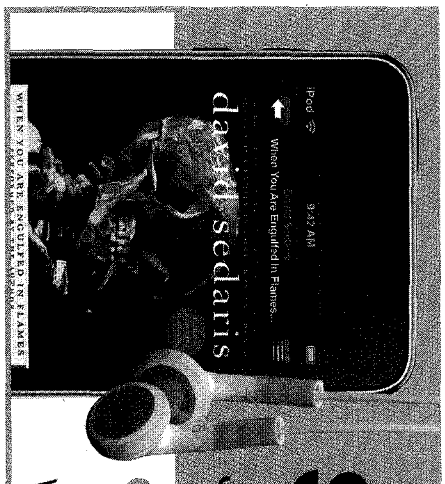
Mrs. Song was an unlikely entrepreneur. She was forty-five years old, and had no business skills other than the ability to tally numbers on an abacus. Her family urged her to start a business in the kitchen and told her that the best product would be tofu, a good source of protein in difficult times. Tofu is widely used in Korean cooking, in soups and stews, fried crispy or fermented. In order to raise the money to buy soybeans at the market, the family started selling their possessions. The first to go was their prized television—a Japanese model they'd got thanks to Chang-bo's father, who had served in intelligence during the Korean War.

Making tofu is relatively easy, if labor-intensive. Soybeans are ground, then boiled, and a coagulating agent is added. Then, like cheese, the mixture is squeezed through a cloth. Afterward, you are left with a watery milk and the husks of the soybeans. Mrs. Song thought it might be a good idea to complement her tofu business by raising pigs, which she could feed with the residue from the tofu. Behind the apartment building was a row of sheds used for storage. Mrs. Song bought a litter of piglets at the market and installed them in one of the sheds, securing the door with a padlock.

For a few months, the business plan was a success. Mrs. Song converted her tiny kitchen into a tofu factory, boiling big vats of soybeans on the stove, which was built into the floor, in the traditional Korean style. She sold the tofu at the neighborhood market. The piglets grew fat on the bean husks and soy milk and whatever grass Mrs. Song could clip for them each morning. But it became increasingly difficult to get wood and coal to fuel the stove. The electricity worked only a few hours a week, and even then its use was restricted to a single sixty-watt light bulb, a television, or a radio. Without fuel to cook the soybeans, Mrs. Song couldn't make tofu. Without the tofu, she had nothing to feed the pigs. It took hours for her to pick enough grass to satisfy them.

"Listen, we might as well eat the grass ourselves," she joked to Chang-bo. Then she added, "If it doesn't poison the pigs, it won't poison us." Eventually, they ate all the pigs, and Mrs. Song gave up the business.

The family began a grim new regimen. Every day, Mrs. Song would hike north and west from the city center, carrying a kitchen knife and a basket to collect edible weeds and grass. If you got out to the mountains, you could find dandelions or other weeds that people ate even in good times. Occasionally, Mrs. Song also collected rotten cabbage leaves that had been discarded by a farmer. She took the day's pickings home and mixed them with whatever food she had enough money to buy. Usually, it was ground cornmeal—the cheap kind, made from the husks and cobs. If she couldn't afford that, she would buy pine-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bark powder, sometimes extended with sawdust.

She chopped and pounded the grasses and the bark into a pulp that was soft enough to digest. The mixture didn't have enough substance to be molded into a noodle or a cake. All she could make was a textureless porridge. The only seasoning she had was salt. A little garlic or red pepper might have disguised the terrible taste, but those spices were too expensive. Oils had become unavailable at any price by the mid-nineteen-nineties, and their absence made cooking difficult. Once, while visiting a relative for lunch, Mrs. Song was served a porridge made of bean stalks and corncobs. As hungry as she was, she couldn't swallow it. The bitter, dry stalks stuck in her throat like the twigs of a bird's nest.

One year, the only animal product Mrs. Song consumed was frog. Her brothers had caught some in the countryside. Mrs. Song's sister-in-law stir-fried the frogs in soy sauce, chopped them into small pieces, and served them over noodles. Frog wasn't typically part of Korean cuisine, and Mrs. Song had never tried it before. She pronounced it delicious. She had only a few chances to eat it again, though. Soon afterward, the frog population of North Korea was decimated by overhunting.

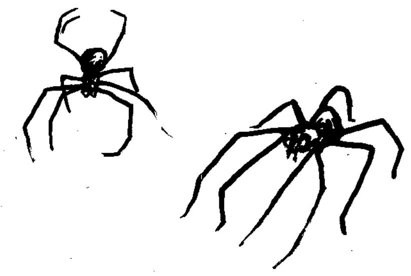
By the middle of 1995, Mrs. Song and her husband had sold most of their valuable possessions for food. After the television went the used Japanese bicycle that was their main means of transportation, and then the sewing machine with which Mrs. Song had made their clothes. They sold most of their clothes and then the wooden wardrobe in which they stored them. The two-room apartment was now empty, except for portraits of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, which hung on the wall as they always had. The only thing left to sell was the apartment itself. North Koreans don't own their own homes; they are merely awarded the right to live there. But an illegal real-estate market had cropped up as people quietly swapped homes, paying off bureaucrats to look the other way. The apartment "sold" for ten thousand won—about a hundred dollars at the black-market rate. Mrs. Song, her husband, and her mother-in-law moved to a single room nearby. (The three daughters had married and their son had moved out.) Mrs. Song decided that she would use the money for another business venture: trading rice.

Rice is the preferred staple of the Korean diet; the word *bap* means rice or "a meal." After 1995, Chongjin residents could get rice only if they had cash to buy it on the black market, and even then it was expensive—about fifty won per kilo, six hundred times what rice had cost through the public-distribution system, when it was available. Almost all the rice consumed in the city arrived by train or by truck, further elevating the price, since the roads and the rail lines had fallen into disrepair. Mrs. Song figured that she could buy rice down the coast, where it was cheaper, and carry it up by train. Trading rice or any staple grain was illegal but widespread, and Mrs. Song decided that it was worth the risk. She'd make a small profit and keep some rice for her family. They hadn't had a proper bowl of rice since 1994.

In November, 1995, Mrs. Song recalls, she set out with ten thousand won hidden in her underwear, disguised by layers of winter clothing. She took a train to South Pyongyang Province and bought two hundred kilos of rice. She put the rice into four large backpacks, which porters helped her load onto the train and stuff under her seat. On the morning of November 25th, she was less than a day's journey away from home. Chang-bo's connections as a journalist had allowed her to get a choice sleeping berth in the third car of the train—the first two being for Workers' Party officials and military officers. The train was long, and each time it rounded a curve the rear cars would come into view just long enough for her to see that people were standing in them. Still more people sat on the roof. The train stopped and started throughout the night and was lurching so violently when Mrs. Song woke up in the morning that she couldn't eat her breakfast. Suddenly, a jolt lifted her out of her seat. The next moment, she was lying on her side, her left cheek pressed against the metal frame of the window. The carriage was on its side.

The train had derailed, and the crowded back carriages had been almost entirely destroyed. Most of their passengers were killed. The front cars had somehow been spared. The death toll from the accident, Mrs. Song heard, was in the hundreds, although, as with most North Korean disasters, it was not reported.

Mrs. Song emerged from the wreckage with a gash in her cheek, the skin ripped off her right leg, and a sprained back. The wooden partition that separated her sleeper compartment from the aisle had fallen on top of her. After three days in an emergency clinic near the scene of the accident, she returned to Chongjin. She was in such pain that she had to be carried off the train, but she felt lucky when she glimpsed Chang-bo on the platform.



After the accident, Mrs. Song was no longer able to hike into the mountains to forage for food She picked whatever grasses and weeds she could find near her house, and threw them into a porridge made from the cheapest grain. It was difficult for the elderly to digest. In May, 1996, her mother-in-law fell ill with dysentery. Within a few days, she was dead.

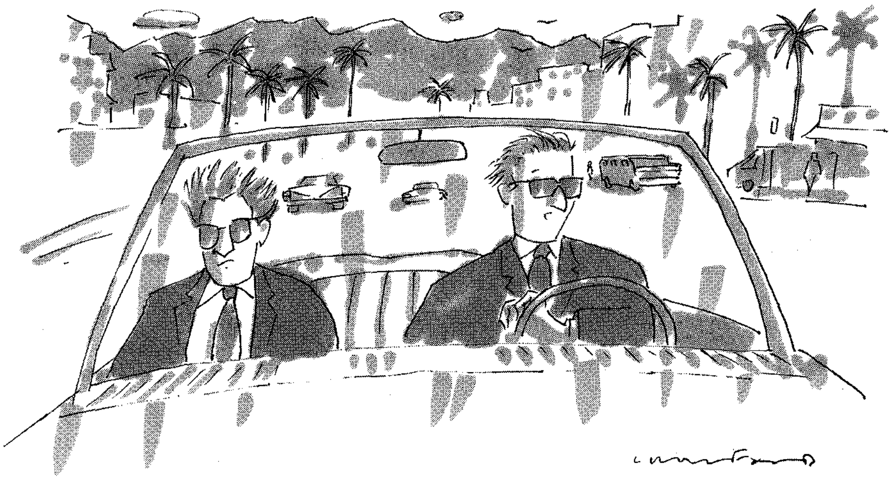
Chang-bo's health was also deteriorating. In his prime, he had been uncommonly large for a North Korean, weighing nearly two hundred pounds. He was so heavy that in the early nineteen-eighties his doctor advised him to take up smoking as a way to lose weight. But now the protuberant belly of which he had been so proud—fat being a status symbol in North Korea—had turned into a hollow pouch. His skin was flaky, as though he were suffering from eczema. His jowls sagged, and his speech was slurred. He had suffered a mild stroke in 1995; by 1997, he had become too weak to work and took to his bed. His legs swelled up like balloons, the effect of what Mrs. Song had come to recognize as edema—fluid retention brought on by starvation. He talked incessantly about food. He spoke of the tofu soups his mother had made him as a child and a delicious meal of fish porridge that Mrs. Song had cooked for him when they were newlyweds.

"Come, darling. Let's go to a good restaurant and order a nice meal," he told his wife one morning in 1997. They hadn't eaten in three days.

Mrs. Song ran to the market, forgetting all about the pain in her back. She spotted her older sister, selling noodles. Her sister's skin was flaked like Chang-bo's from malnutrition, and Mrs. Song had resisted asking her for help, but now she was desperate.

"I'll pay you back," Mrs. Song promised as she ran home with a container of noodles.

Chang-bo was curled up on his side under the blanket. Mrs. Song called his name. When he didn't respond, she went to turn him over—it wasn't difficult now that he had lost so much weight, but his legs and arms were stiff and got in the way. Mrs. Song pounded on his chest, screaming for help even though she knew it was too late.



"I hate calling her—she always picks up."

• •

Between six hundred thousand and 2.5 million North Koreans died as a result of the famine—up to about ten per cent of the population. In Chongjin, where food supplies disappeared earlier and more precipitately than in other parts of North Korea, the death rates were likely much greater. Exact figures are impossible to tally, since North Korean hospitals were prohibited from reporting starvation as a cause of death.

Kim Jong-il, who assumed control of the government after his father's death, in 1994, took a much harder line against individual enterprise than his father had. "In a socialist society, even the food problem should be solved in a socialist way," he said in a December, 1996, speech, one of the few in which he is known to have acknowledged the food crisis. "Telling people to solve the food problem on their own . . . creates egoism among people." Any private endeavor could be classified as an "economic crime," and the penalties included deportation to a labor camp and, if corruption was alleged, execution. But death was a virtual certainty for people who didn't show some private initiative.

Most business took place at the old farmers' markets. Even in the glory days of Communism, Kim Il-sung had grudgingly tolerated some markets, with the restriction that they could sell only supplementary foods that people raised in their kitchen gardens. Almost all the venders were women. This remained the case in the nineteen-nineties. Joo Sung-ha, a North Korean defector from North Hamgyong Province who became a journalist in Seoul, told me he believed that Kim Jong-il had tacitly agreed to let women work privately, to relieve the pressure on families. "If the *ajummas* hadn't been allowed to work, there would have been a revolution," he said. Some of the *ajummas* would whisper among themselves, "Men aren't worth as much as the dog that guards the house."

During this period, even as the famine worsened in Chongjin, more food appeared at the markets. Cabbages, radishes, lettuce, tomatoes, scallions, and potatoes were for sale. There was suddenly white rice, in forty-kilo burlap sacks imprinted with the interlocking olive branches of the United Nations symbol or with the U.S. flag, which every North Korean recognized from propaganda posters, where it was often shown dripping with blood or pierced with bayonets.

One day, Mrs. Song spotted a convoy of trucks driving from the port with similar burlap sacks stacked in the back. Although the trucks had civilian license plates, she figured that they belonged to the military—nobody else had gasoline, as far as she knew—and that this was humanitarian aid that somebody in the Army was selling for profit at the market. No matter where it was from, people in Chongjin were happy to see white rice, which hadn't been available at the public-distribution center for years, although few could afford to buy it.

Every time she went to the market, Mrs. Song saw something that astonished her. Peaches. Grapes. Bananas. She couldn't remember the last time she'd seen bananas—maybe twenty years ago, when Chang-bo brought some home as a treat for the children. One day, she saw oranges. Mrs. Song had never tasted an orange, but she recognized it from pictures. Another day, she saw a mottled yellow-brown fruit with green spikes growing from the top. It was only years later, when she had moved to Seoul and saw the fruit again, that she learned it was a pineapple.

After Chang-bo's death, Mrs. Song decided that her future lay in cookies. They needed only ten minutes in the oven; a modest amount of charcoal, which was growing ever more scarce, could bake four or five batches. They were easier to bake than bread, and they made a quick meal for hungry people on the move.

Mrs. Song was joined in the cookie business by her youngest daughter, Yong-hee, who was twenty-nine. Yong-hee borrowed four hundred won to buy scrap metal and found an unemployed welder from a local steel mill to make it into an oven. It was a square box, divided in two, so that charcoal could burn in the lower compartment while cookies baked in the upper one. He also made a cookie sheet. Many women had come up with the same idea, and for a while Mrs. Song took a job with one of them, to watch and learn. She bought samples from other venders to taste and compare. When she found one she liked, she tried to replicate the recipe out of flour, sugar, water, and yeast.

The first trial batches were not suitable to sell to the public. Mrs. Song and her daughter ate their failures rather than waste the precious ingredients. Eventually, Mrs. Song figured out that she had to use more sugar and leavening. She added milk to the recipe and cut the dough into different shapes.

Mrs. Song got up at 5 A.M. to do the baking. The competition was stiff, and her cookies needed to be fresh. She didn't have a cart or even a crate from which to sell her product, so she packed the cookies into a basin, which she carried in a homemade backpack until she got to a main street near the market with many pedestrians and few competitors. With her back aching, she'd sit cross-legged on the ground and put the basin of cookies on her knees.

Mrs. Song sold about a thousand cookies every day to people who had no time or money for a proper meal. At the end of a fourteen-hour workday, she had about a hundred won in her pocket, and a few bags of other goods, sometimes red peppers or a few lumps of coal, that she took in exchange for cookies. It was just enough for her to buy food for dinner and the ingredients for the next batch of cookies.

Mrs. Song often stumbled across the dead and the dying. Late one afternoon, on her way home from the market, she took a detour to the train station, hoping to find customers to buy some unsold cookies. Workers were sweeping the station's plaza. A couple of men walked by, pulling a heavy wooden cart. It was filled with half a dozen bodies, people who had died at the station overnight. A head lolled as the cart jostled over the pavement. It belonged to a man about forty years old. His eyes blinked faintly. Not quite dead yet, but close enough to be carted away.

From the outside, Chongjin looked unchanged. The same gray façades of the Stalinist office buildings stared out at empty stretches of asphalt. The roads were still marked by the faded red propaganda signs extolling the achievements of the regime. The place looked as if the clocks of world history had stopped in 1970. But Mrs. Song knew that she was living in a topsy-turvy world. The men were stuck in unpaying state jobs; women were making the money. The markets were stocked with food—more food than most North Koreans had seen in their lifetime—yet people were dying from hunger. Workers' Party members had starved to death; those who never gave a damn about the fatherland were making money. The future belonged to those who broke the rules.

Every six months or so after our first meeting, Mrs. Song and I got together for a meal in Seoul. She enjoyed eating out. Although she never developed a taste for pizza or hamburgers, she came to love the South Korean style of barbecuing beef and pork at the table. Whenever I saw her, she was wearing a new outfit. Everything from the cheery pastels of her clothing to her perfectly coiffed hair suggested a woman in control of her life.

Mrs. Song had adapted quickly to South Korea. She got a job as a housekeeper, and by living frugally she was able to travel. She joined tour groups of older women and explored South Korea. She even indulged in cosmetic surgery to add an extra fold to her upper eyelid—a popular procedure. After so many years of sacrificing for others, she took care of herself. When she developed a paunch—to her astonishment, after so many years of deprivation—she started watching her weight.

Mrs. Song was by no means an apologist for the North Korean regime—"That rotten bastard!" she once said of Kim Jong-il, the only time I ever heard her use profanity—but she was not as embittered as most defectors I had met. She even professed a certain nostalgia for the idealism that used to propel her out of bed early to dust the portrait of Kim Il-sung.

One evening, we were sitting around a steaming pot of shabu-shabu, thinly sliced beef cooked in a broth and dipped in sesame sauce. "When I see a good meal like this, it makes me cry," Mrs. Song said, dabbing at her eyes with a tissue. "I can't helping thinking of Chang-bo's last words, 'Let's go to a good restaurant and order a nice meal.' " ♦

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Audio slide show: Song Hee-suk's ordeal.

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

FANSHAWE

BY IAN FRAZIER

Fanshawe had just the one name. He didn't mind this, having come from a long line of single-name Fanshawes. Fanshawe's father, also, was Fanshawe—just Fanshawe—while his mother, née Richardson, had never been known by any name but that until she married Fanshawe's father, whereupon she became (somewhat less simply) Fanshawe-Richardson. The cumbersomeness of such a string of syllables finally proving too much for her, she shortened this formulation to Fanshawe-, and then quietly dropped the hyphen some years afterward. The Fanshawes' union produced four children—Fanshawe, a younger brother, and two older sisters. Each, of course, was christened Fanshawe. The family had been in New England for generations and did not approve of excessive fuss. Having six people in the same house all called Fanshawe, without further designation or perhaps a number system to distinguish one from another, made for obvious complications, but we needn't let that trouble us here, because I think both the reader and I know which Fanshawe I mean, namely, the Fanshawe in the first sentence, whom I was originally referring to, and whom this story is about.

When the time came for Fanshawe to marry, he surprised his friends and family by choosing a foreign student from Seville, Spain, who had about eleven names—Maria Conchita Something Something DiBiasio y Cosmo Something, and so on. I never met this wife, and so am not in a position to judge her. The marriage soon ended in divorce. For the rest of his twenties and into his early thirties, Fanshawe "played the field," as we used to say. In college, Fanshawe's social set had included an unusual number of men—Neuman, Farrel, Fogel, Harrison, Fegley, Carson, Foster, Ferguson, Sapers, Miles, Northon, Winslow—who were mononomes like himself. Aside from this evident preference, Fanshawe could in no way have been described as a snob. But, when he determined to marry for a second time, he seemed almost perversely to delight in informing his intimates that his new bride possessed no name at all.

The wedding ceremony was of the sort in which the couple have written their own vows, and a compliant reverend presides. The bride had announced that she would be keeping her own name, or lack of one, so the expected difficulties this presented in the proceedings were got around by saying "[bride's name here]" whenever she had to be referred to. "I, [bride's name here], do take you, Fanshawe, to be my lawfully wedded husband," and so on. Well, it was awkward, and more than faintly ridiculous, but none of us who attended these odd nuptials raised an eyebrow. All of us were old enough by now to have learned that what goes on between two people in a marriage can never be accurately gauged from the outside.

Looking back, I can't say exactly when it was that things started to go to pieces for Fanshawe. His marriage certainly didn't help matters any. From the punctiliousness with which he spoke of, and insisted others speak of, his new bride, you might have thought she was the ineffable, unnameable divinity Herself. Whenever you asked after the wife, you had to sort of slur the word, or swallow it, as in "How's your *w*, *w*, you know, your *w*—?"

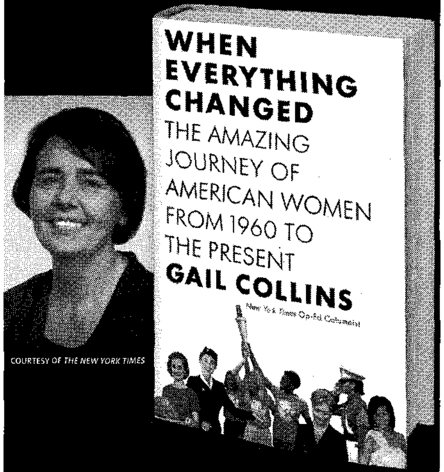
In correspondence, Fanshawe wouldn't even spell it out, but used ampersands for the vowels. Then, in the middle of all this, as if demoralized by the mounting confusion, Fanshawe's parents both died. First Fanshawe, the father, keeled over deader than a Portuguese mackerel on the paddle-tennis court one afternoon, only to be followed in quick succession by Fanshawe, Fanshawe's mother, who pitched head first from a birding tower on the East Coast flyway near Cape May. An autopsy later revealed that she had died of plaid.

Their deaths left Fanshawe absolutely bereft—and by Fanshawe I mean, of course, the person I've been focussing on from the beginning, and none of the other Fanshawes, though I intend them no disrespect. Obviously, they have a right to be called whatever they want. As the chronicler of these events, however, I would like to register my distinct annoyance at having to write about so many people of the same name. For at this point (the senior Fanshawes having died intestate) I must describe several lawsuits wherein Fanshawe, the elder of the sisters, sued Fanshawe, the brother, while Fanshawe, the younger sister, sued all three of her Fanshawe siblings, including Fanshawe. (And by this last Fanshawe I am of course indicating, etc., etc.) In passing, I can only warn other authors that if they are ever tempted to write about a stylish main character who possesses just a single name they run a serious risk of falling into exactly the sort of tangle I find myself in here.

There turned out to be a lot of one-name Fanshawes, all right? I guess I did fail to anticipate that. And I'll be up front with you—I honestly don't care in the slightest about any of the others except as they bear on the Fanshawe I was writing about in the first place. I just loved the way it sounded, that plain Fanshawe, with its forceful, uncluttered, Waspy, masculine brio—like something you'd call a classmate in a good preparatory school. Begin a story with a single name like that and, why, *the thing practically writes itself!* Or so I believed at the time.

And what (by the way) of Fanshawe's mother, Fanshawe—that plucky woman who died of plaid? People of my acquaintance in the medical profession assure me that, unlikely as it sounds, one can indeed die of a toxicity caused by both type and number of plaids, their juxtaposition on the skin, and other factors. What is quite a bit murkier is the exact sequence of events, because the body was found to have a broken neck, doubtless the result of the fall. Apparently, she had been shot repeatedly at close range as well. Whether the plaid reaction, of which there was abundant evidence, occurred before or after the neck was broken and the bullets fired cannot be determined by the available technologies. All may be as the report first stated, with plaid as the innocent cause. Fanshawe (orig. guy) wonders about this every day, as do, I'm sure, the innumerable other Fanshawes, though you will have to ask them yourself. None of them, including Fanshawe, are still speaking to me. ♦

From acclaimed
New York Times columnist
Gail Collins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MEDICAL DISPATCH

ROBOTS THAT CARE

Advances in technological therapy.

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

Born in Belgrade, in what was then Yugoslavia, Maja Matarić originally wanted to study languages and art. After she and her mother moved to the United States, in 1981, her uncle, who had immigrated some years earlier, pressed her to concentrate on computers. As a graduate student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Matarić wrote software that helped robots to independently navigate around obstacles placed randomly in a room. For her doctoral dissertation, she developed a robotic shepherd capable of corralling a herd of twenty robots.

At the end of her graduate training, Matarić, influenced by her knowledge of cognitive science, became interested in how people could benefit from interacting with robots. Now forty-four and a professor of computer science at the University of Southern California, she has begun working with stroke and Alzheimer's patients and autistic children, searching for a way to make machines that can engage directly with them, encouraging both physical and cognitive rehabilitation.

"We wanted to do something entirely different," Matarić told me. She assembled a team of experts in several disciplines: psychology, mechanical engineering, kinesiology, rehabilitation medicine, and neurology. The team members observed Isaac Asimov's First Law of Robotics: the robot must not injure the patient. They also had to determine what tone of voice was optimal, what type of language the robot should use, how close it should get to the patient—essentially, what kinds of personality and temperament were most effective, and for what kind of patient. The robot would coach the patients orally, rather than physically. (One that physically touched a patient might require approval by the Food and Drug Administration as a device, given the potential safety issues.)

In 2003, Matarić initiated a pilot trial for stroke patients with Carolee Winstein, a professor of biokinesiology and physical therapy at U.S.C. Matarić and Winstein set out to build a robot that would attend a stroke victim in her home, persuading her to employ a weakened limb in her daily activities. Every year, some eight hundred thousand Americans suffer strokes. Currently, Medicare provides limited benefits for rehabilitation, and funding for supervised therapy is especially meagre. A socially assistive robot would be a one-time investment and could be recycled once the person had recovered strength and mobility. (Matarić's research is still in the early stages of testing, and commercial application is years away.)

Winstein believed that people who have a motor disability, like the loss of strength in an arm after a stroke, pursue a path of least resistance. For example, if they want to reach for a cereal box on a shelf after losing force and mobility in their right arm they will simply use their left arm. Such shortcuts undermine the critical period after a stroke when the brain is most plastic and offers the best chance for recovery. And rehabilitative robots tend to retrain the limb in only one motion. "It's as if I wanted to show you how to swing a racquet in tennis," Matarić explained. "I stand behind you and grab your arm and put you through it. But you have to learn to generalize on your own. If you keep doing it with me holding you, you are not actually going to learn. You have to learn how to reach for the cereal on your own, based on your own motivation and your own mode of guiding."

Medical robots are, for the most part, tools to enhance a doctor's or a therapist's techniques—like orthotic devices, which help improve motor control and range of motion after a stroke or other trauma and can offer modified degrees of assistance as the patient recovers. Allison Okamura, a professor of mechanical engineering at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland, is studying, along with a team of neuroscientists, the potential applications of a robotic exoskeleton for patients who have suffered damage to the cerebellum. Such patients have trouble controlling their limbs; the exoskeleton robot would encase their arms and coördinate physical movements. The patient could use the robot until he recovered, or perhaps for the rest of his life, if the deficit persisted.

With extroverts, robots can speak forcefully; with introverts, they are more soothing.

BOB STAAKE

Matarić's work on social robots, however, must address a higher level of complexity. "The challenge is to have cognitive models built into the robots, so the robot understands how to motivate people," Okamura says. "In my work, we just have to move patients in the right way. What we are doing is still quite hard, but what Matarić is trying to do is much harder."

Rodney Brooks, Matarić's mentor at M.I.T. and a former director of its artificial-intelligence program, is a pioneer in designing robots that function independently in unstructured environments. (He helped found iRobot, the company that developed the Roomba vacuum cleaner and other devices.) "Maja's work with me was inspired by termites," he told me, which are able to build complex structures. "Her work was to develop simple rules for robots that, like termites, have no cognition and when alone can't accomplish much," Brooks explained. Matarić's current work on socially assistive robots, in which humans and machines work together, strikes Brooks as a natural evolution from her graduate work. He noted, "She is taking a lead in moving to an imaginative level."

In a pilot trial involving six stroke patients, Matarić's team found that a patient was more apt to take up the task at hand when encouraged by the robot than when he was alone and unprompted. Related studies have also shown that the patient is more responsive when the robot is in the room, rather than when it is shown to the patient on a computer screen or presented in a simulated way, using a three-dimensional virtual robot.

A woman I will call Mary, a schoolteacher in Los Angeles, suffered a stroke in 2001, when she was forty-six. She spent six months working with a physical therapist at the U.S.C. Medical Center to regain strength in her weakened right arm and leg, before taking part in Matarić's study. I watched a videotape of her session with Matarić. Mary, who was dressed in a white blouse and dark slacks, shuffled slowly to a desk stacked with magazines. There was a shelf nearby, set above shoulder level. She looked at the robot, several feet away, and waved to it. "Come over here," she said warmly.

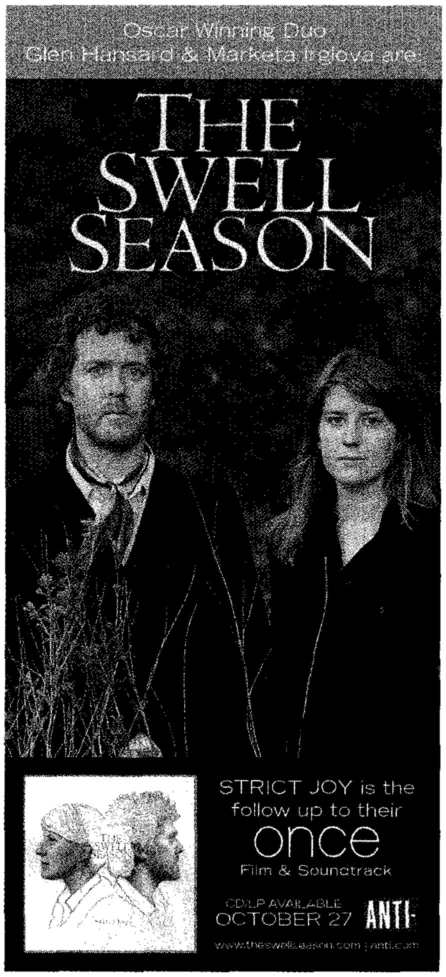
The robot, which was three feet high and looked a little like R2-D2, in "Star Wars," scooted close to her and stopped. "Very good," Mary said.

Set on a mobile base with rotary wheels, the robot could turn in any direction and move around the room, guided by sonar. It tracked Mary's movement with a scanning laser range finder; a pan-tilt-zoom camera allowed it to look at Mary, turn away, or shake its head. A speaker, embedded in the robot's side, produced prerecorded speech and sound effects.

Glancing at the robot, Mary lifted a magazine from the top of the pile and guided it into a rack on top of the shelf. As soon as the magazine was in place, the robot emitted a beep. During the next few minutes, Mary moved each magazine, one by one, to the rack. Gradually, she increased her pace, and the beeps from the robot came faster. Mary began to laugh.

She turned and looked squarely at the robot. With a sly smile, she moved her weak arm toward the remaining magazines on the desk and mimed putting one into the rack. She then stuck her tongue out at the machine.

Matarić said, "She is cheating. She is totally thrilled, because she thinks she cheated the robot." The robot, though, was on to the game. A reflective white band that Mary wore on her leg allowed the robot to follow her movements. A thin motion sensor attached to her sleeve transmitted Mary's gestures to the robot, so that it knew almost instantly whether she was raising her arm and in what motion. A sensor in the rack signalled the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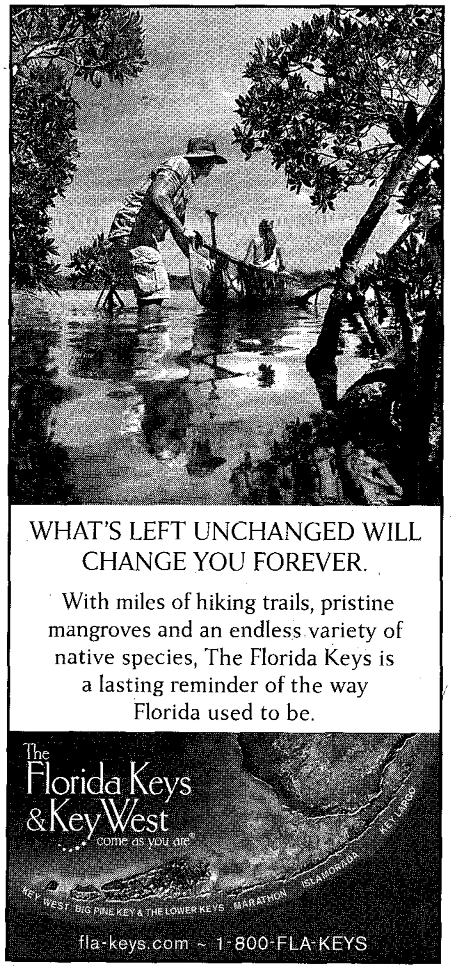
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LETTER TO TSVETAEVA

Ah, now our time has come, Marina.
You visit me at night while I sit alone
with a glass of wine in hand
—you who do not need a key—
for you the most secret door of my room
is always open:
abandoned by our mothers,
we both loved children and poetry,
and hated Paris and poverty,
wearing the one and only dirty dress,
we kept clear of landlords and cops.
We both had blue eyes, many lovers,
and the incapacity to live with anyone.
Ah, I almost forgot: our fathers, too,
had similar jobs—they occupied themselves
with museums and art . . .
Still, I got angry yesterday
when someone called me Marina . . .
I'm neither important nor odd enough
to send daily reports to Beria . . .
How furious I was that you hanged yourself!
What courage, what a double cross, what a lie,
what a betrayal of poetry . . .
Marina, I'm a child as you can see,
about you and life I really know nothing.

—*Nina Zivancevic*

(*Translated, from the Serbian, by Charles Simic.*)

robot when a magazine was properly placed, and the robot communicated with Mary only when she performed the task correctly.

Although the task lasted about an hour, the novelty of the interaction did not seem to wane. In a debriefing after the study, Mary said, "When I'm at home, my husband is useless. He just says, 'Do it.' I much prefer the robot to my husband."

But not all the patients in the pilot study were won over. In a video that I watched with Matarić, a trim man in his fifties took one magazine, and then another, and placed each in the rack. He made limited eye contact with the robot. The robot tried to encourage him. "Keep going," it said. "Very good, keep going." The man didn't respond. "Does he look like he is having fun?" Matarić asked. "Never a smile, never a word to the robot." When the task was over, he walked away.

Matarić concluded that, as with human caregivers, temperament would be a key factor. The robots would need to be able to judge whether a patient was introverted or extroverted, and know how to respond in the appropriate manner.

To test their theory, Matarić and her team categorized the personalities of healthy volunteers, using the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, and observed their responses to robots that were programmed to behave as introverts or extroverts. A robot's degree of sociability was defined by how far it positioned itself from the patient, the speed of its movements, and its type of communication. For people who were more extroverted, Matarić programmed the robot to move close. "We are not talking sociopathically close, because we always maintain three to four feet of safety distance between the user and the robot," she explained. "But, with the extroverted robots, they move into your area, and talk with a slightly higher pitch, more words per unit time, and they say things that are more forceful, like 'Come on, you can do three more. I know you can do better than that.'" The more introverted robots were programmed to stay farther away from the user, to gesticulate less, and to speak with a slightly lower pitch and at a slower tempo. "You don't want to make the introversion glaring," Matarić said. The introverted robots also said more soothing things and offered more praise.

Nineteen subjects participated—seven on the introverted end of the scale and twelve on the extroverted end. The volunteers were instructed to perform tasks with their non-dominant hand, to resemble the impairment of a stroke. They drew lines on paper placed on an easel, lifted books from the desktop to the shelf, moved pencils from one bin to another, and turned the pages of a newspaper. The objective measure was how much time was spent on each task. "When the subject and the robot are matched, people perform significantly longer on a task," Matarić said. "So if you are an extrovert I'll give you an extrovert robot." Of course, Matarić noted, a stroke patient's temperament may change over time. As he begins to recover, he may regain a livelier demeanor.

So Matarić and her co-workers developed an algorithm for learned behavior, with the robot adapting to match the participant's preferences in terms of therapy style, interaction distance, and speed of movement. The robot was able to gauge the subject's time and success in performing the assigned task and then to modify its behavior accordingly. "We actually had the robot slightly shift its personality, gradually, while interacting with the user," Matarić said. This capacity to adapt is called "machine learning." The programming has to be carefully done, she explained, because "you don't want the robot to schizophrenically suddenly change. You don't want it to become a dictator all of a sudden, because that breaks the whole engagement." She went on, "But over time, with slow changes, you end up somewhere that's quite different from where you started. The notion of social engagement is to keep people doing something even if they really don't want to do it. It may be painful, it may be boring, it may remind them of their disability, which is frustrating. But we know you need to not be in your comfort zone, because if you are fully comfortable, then you are not pushing yourself enough."

Human coaches, Matarić explained, might read a person's facial expression, but even an intelligent robot has difficulty interpreting nuances in lighting and appearance. Also, patients may mask their feelings. To overcome these problems, Matarić's team placed galvanic sensors on a band on the subject's upper arm, whose readings Matarić believes will provide the robot with sufficient information about whether a patient is being challenged or becoming frustrated. (Other physiological changes, such as sweating from vigorous exercise, could affect the reading.) In a test requiring subjects to move a ring around a maze without hitting the boundary, during which the robot would announce points lost when they made mistakes, Matarić's team was able to predict with nearly ninety-per-cent accuracy when people were about to quit. "So you know that they were not happy about something," Matarić explained. "And then you can switch modes, do something else, or praise them. The idea is for the robot to have general understanding." The system also allows for greater privacy than a camera device. "I don't want to have to worry about whether I'm dressed when the robot is in the room," Matarić said.

In a new trial, with twelve stroke patients and six healthy controls, launched at U.S.C. in October, Matarić is trying to customize robotic behavior to assess how much variety patients want. "Clearly, some people need steady repetition," Matarić said. "But others, like Mary, just want to discover new things. I mean, she is not compliant. This issue of compliance is huge. How do you get people to do what they need to do when most people don't want to do it? And then you have certain personalities that are extremely prone to not wanting to do it." A former teacher, Mary "would probably never tolerate cheating, or miming a task, and certainly not tolerate sticking out her tongue at an instructor," Matarić noted. But her efforts to outsmart the robot may have represented an attempt to restore the sense of self lost as a result of her stroke. "This is something that we are thinking about as another dimension of the robot-human interaction: how much

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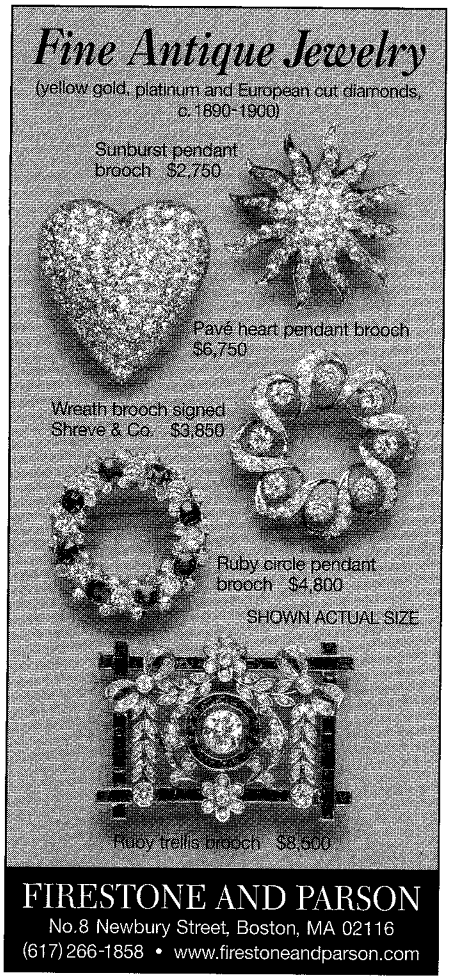
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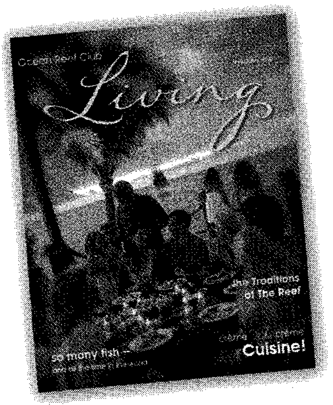

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authority should the robot have?" Patients don't want to be entirely subservient to the robot, Matarić said. "Disabled people don't want to give up what's remaining to them."

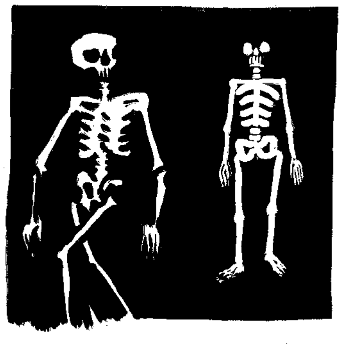
Gerontologists have observed that, when fish tanks are introduced into a nursing home, residents congregate to watch the fish; this not only sparks more conversation among the residents but also encourages healthier eating. Robotic pets, which do not require the caretaking of a real pet, have also been shown to increase socializing and reduce stress. Matarić hoped to produce a similar effect by providing humanlike interaction through a robot, focussing on elderly people who have been given a diagnosis of mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease. In a video taken at an elder-care facility in Silverado, California, a robot sang "Singin' in the Rain" to a frail-looking woman with silver-gray hair who sat beside it. The game was Name That Tune: the patient would press one of three buttons to identify the song. (The robot might offer hints, like "the weather.") After a few moments, the woman started to sing along. Then she pressed the first button, and the robot exclaimed, "Right button!" It made a motion to clap its hands. Later, a similar task was done using a computer screen instead of the robot; the woman would not look at the screen, and took much longer to identify the song and to push the right button.

At the beginning of the study, the Alzheimer's patients tended to avoid looking directly at the robot, and offered less spontaneous speech. Over the course of the study, which lasted six months, the patients showed significant improvement. They increased their focus and more often pressed the right button. "They improved their performance within the pretty small envelope of what's possible," Matarić said. "And there was no progress like that with the computer screen. It's counterintuitive, because you would think that if you give very old people robots they might be put off by how alien they are. But it actually seems to be less alien than the computer."

Matarić has begun a new study, expected to last through the year, using a robot that plays Simon Says, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has recently given her funding to do a large study with seventy people, including healthy adults and elderly patients. The study will compare socially assistive robots with computers in tasks that enhance learning and may improve brain function.

The testing in Silverado also revealed that some of the elderly and mildly demented patients projected their emotions onto the robot. "One woman actually refers to it as a grandchild," Matarić said. "Others said that they would like to arrange their schedule around singing to the robot, and, frankly, there was not that much schedule to arrange. But it's the high point of their day." During the six months, the robots became part of the patients' lives. "One woman spun quite a yarn," Matarić said. "They had whole internal stories about how the robot fit into their lives, however unreal those stories may be."

Three years ago, CosmoBot, a robot produced by AnthroTronix, a Maryland-based startup, was introduced at the Neurodevelopmental Diagnostic Center for Young Children, in Crofton, Maryland, serving children with autism and with genetic disorders that affect the nervous system. CosmoBot is a Wizard of Oz robot that is externally controlled by a therapist; it has an elliptical head and the ability to swivel, in order to change its gaze. "The robot performs a motor action in a highly predictable way, repeating exactly the same sequence over and over," Carole Samango-Sprouse, the director of the center, explained. The robot is captivating and toylike, she said, and less stressful than human demonstration, in which minor variations can seem extreme and disturbing for a child with learning or behavioral difficulties. In addition, the robot can change a sequence but still make it appear predictable. More than thirty children have worked with the robot, and the initial observations, presented at an assistive-



technology conference in January, have shown improvements not only in motor ability but also in social skills. "These children are encased in their own disability," Samango-Sprouse said. "The robot gave us a really nice bridge to build imitation for motor development and then speech and then social engagement."

One of those children was Kevin Fitzgerald, a six-year-old who lives outside Baltimore. His mother, Patty, noted that Kevin experienced delays in learning to roll over, sit up, and walk. "Everything that we teach him, we have to teach him step by step," she said. Kevin has been given a diagnosis of generalized dyspraxia, a disorder characterized by weakness and poor coördination, particularly of his arms and mouth. His social and emotional functioning is also severely impaired. "He tends to go to the extremes," Patty told me. "If you are sitting and playing and someone comes up and takes the toy away, he can have a complete meltdown, whereas another kid might just get mad. And at the other extreme, when he gets happy, he will be giggling and laughing and his arms swing and his whole body is moving." Kevin also had great difficulty with speech, often simply grunting or screaming. "We were mostly communicating through sign language at that time," Patty told me. "But it was really limited success. He got frustrated and didn't want to do that. He wanted to speak."

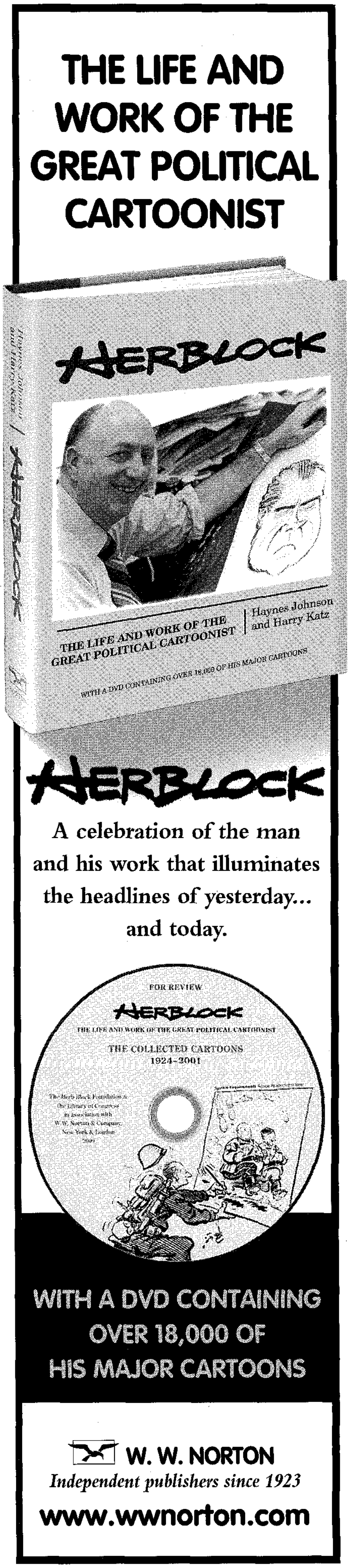
In November, 2007, she brought him to the center in Crofton. The therapist at the center placed a glove on Kevin's hand so that he could wirelessly direct CosmoBot around the room by making gestures to the right or the left. "I think it put Kevin in the instructor role, which he never was in," his mother said. "He always was the one having to listen to whatever people told him to do, constantly, all day long—No, Kevin, don't touch that. Kevin, be careful. Kevin, slow down."

Whenever Kevin accomplished a task, the therapist remotely controlling CosmoBot would have it clap its hands and say, "Good job." Eventually, Kevin was able to navigate the robot through a maze. "CosmoBot is calm and consistent," Patty said. "He is not another child who gets upset about something or even too excited. . . . And the robot can do things ten times over exactly the same way without getting frustrated." Patty told me that Kevin's speech and behavior have markedly improved since he began working with CosmoBot.

The C.E.O. of AnthroTronix is Corinna Lathan, who, like Maja Matarić, earned a Ph.D. at M.I.T. The company has struggled to get the financial backing that would allow it to conduct studies and distribute the CosmoBot. Although it has received some support from the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health, she said, robotics "has never been hot in the investment community, and I totally get why: it's hardware, and investing in hardware has a low return on investment when you are comparing it to Internet-based or software-based products."

AnthroTronix is now shifting away from using CosmoBot as a therapeutic device and recently received a grant from the Department of Education. A Phase II study in Minnesota, run by the Mayo Clinic with funds from the National Institutes of Health, is pilot-testing CosmoBot for children with individualized education plans that require physical therapy, including those with neurodevelopmental disorders or cerebral palsy. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires schools to provide assistive technology to children, and Lathan hopes that "there will be a little more open-mindedness."

David Feil-Seifer, a graduate student in Matarić's laboratory, is working to develop a socially assistive robot for children with autism without the need for a Wizard of Oz setup. Feil-Seifer and Matarić have already conducted pilot studies with eleven children who are cared for at the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles. Peter Mundy, a professor of psychology and education at the University of California at Davis and an expert on autism, helped design the study. Mundy was one of the researchers who first identified a disturbance in "joint attention"—the ability to share interests and information with other individuals—which occurs in many children with autistic-spectrum disorders. Mundy hypothesized that the robot "would be a central medium to build joint attention," since many children with autism are able to focus on objects in a way that they are unable to do with other people. Feil-Seifer and Mundy hoped to measure improvement by whether a child with au-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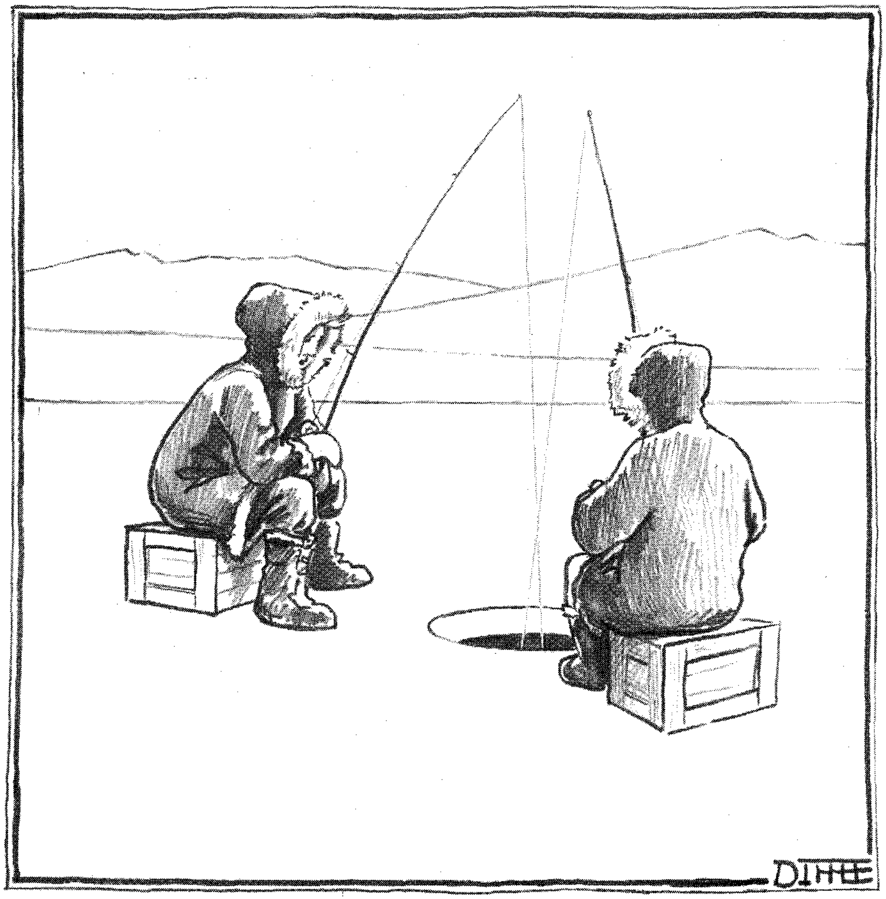


"You keep saying 'ice fishing' as if there were some other kind."

• •

tism could shift his attention from the robot to a parent or a therapist, and then back to the robot.

Feil-Seifer and I watched a series of videotapes from these initial experiments. The robot, which was programmed to use hand gestures, waved a boy toward it. As the child drew closer, the robot emitted a series of soft beeps, and nodded its head. But the boy retreated. "Look at how the robot expresses disappointment when the child moves away," Feil-Seifer said. The robot had put its head down, as if discouraged, and then waved again in a gesture meant to encourage the child to come closer.

The robot had a bubble blower in its lower torso. On its shoulders were two large buttons, one red and one green. The robot first spontaneously blew bubbles, and then stopped. The mother encouraged her son to approach the robot and press a button. When he did, it produced streams of bubbles. The boy laughed and looked squarely at his mother.

"You see how he is interacting," Feil-Seifer said. "He is both physically interacting with the robot and also looking back at his mom, talking to his mom, not just talking to the robot. And he is exploring the robot, trying to figure out how he can do things. This is very encouraging to us. And it's in contrast to what we are going to see next."

The second video showed the robot with the boy at another session. This time, when he pressed a button on the robot's shoulder, nothing happened. A short time later, bubbles spontaneously flowed from the robot, and then shut off.

When the robot blew bubbles randomly, the boy began to play with the bubbles. He touched the button again, but nothing happened. He immediately withdrew from the robot, placed his back against the wall, and looked down at the floor, ignoring both his mother and the machine.

Feil-Seifer, with Matarić's guidance, is trying to figure out how to design robot behavior that meshes with the child's expectations about the robot. He further tested random versus contingent bubble blowing in another child with autism who had been evaluated as "high functioning." When the robot responded with bubbles to the child's pressing the button, the boy became deeply absorbed, standing close to it, and looking repeatedly at his mother with a smile. But, during another session, when the robot began randomly blowing bubbles he moved off to the side. "He doesn't try again in front of it," Feil-Seifer said. "He is not trying to socially interact with it at all. He is really disappointed." At the end of the session, the child turned to his mother and said, "I think the robot is learning-disabled."

The "uncanny valley" effect, a term coined by the Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori in 1970, was a serious consideration for Matarić's team when they were developing these social robots. Mori's hypothesis, that there is a moment at which familiarity becomes unease as a robot becomes more humanlike, has been linked to Sigmund Freud's 1919 essay "Das Unheimliche" ("The Uncanny"), which explores the effect of objects that seem both familiar and alien, causing simultaneous attraction and repulsion. If the robot looks completely like a machine, with no anthropomorphic characteristics, there is limited empathic engagement. But, if it looks too human, people quickly become uneasy and even disgusted.

David Hanson, who trained at the Rhode Island School of Design and once worked at Disney's MAPO (short for Mary Poppins) lab, crafts strikingly realistic heads for his robots, with lifelike skin made of a material called Frubber. He has developed robots that have speech-recognition capability and are programmed to respond; his Philip K. Dick robot, based on the science-fiction writer, incorporates thousands of words from Dick's œuvre and interviews. (Other models include Joey Chaos, who has a snarky attitude; Albert Hubo, made in the likeness of Einstein; and Vera, a "humanlike robot of universal beauty," modelled on the bust of Nefertiti in Berlin's Neues Museum.) Hanson believes that his creations give "the illusion of a soul in the machine," and that eventually his robots "will evolve into socially intelligent beings, capable of love and earning a place in the extended human family."

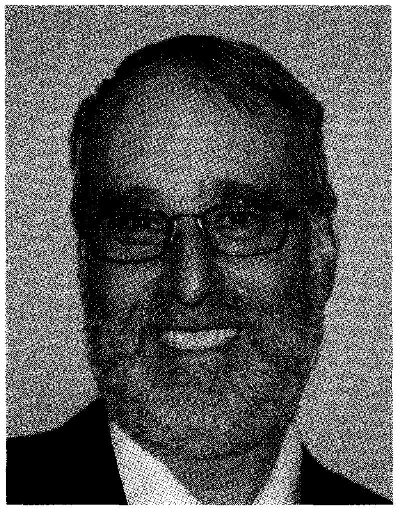
Most scientists in the field of robot-

TAX AND ESTATE PLANNING: **FORESIGHT AND ANALYSIS**

Answers from renowned tax experts

Barry C. Picker, Rick Rodgers, Twila Slesnick, and **John Suttle**

Tax and estate planning is a critical component of a sound financial strategy, and one of the most complicated. With tax codes ever changing, it can be difficult to navigate the landscape of options for maximizing the advantages available to clients. Lincoln Financial is pleased to offer guidance from this panel of tax and financial planning experts.



BARRY C. PICKER

Q: How are you addressing the new Roth IRA rules with your clients? A: Starting in 2010, there will no longer be income limitations for individuals who want to convert their traditional IRA accounts into Roth IRAs. As a result, many individuals who had previously been unable to have Roth IRA accounts will be able to create them now. We are in the process of contacting clients we believe might benefit from having Roth IRAs and discussing the pros and cons of their converting all or part of their traditional IRAs next year.

Q: What are the potential benefits of making a full or partial Roth IRA conversion? A: The main benefit is the fact that by paying the income tax on the value of the account at the time of the conversion, all future growth will be income-tax-free, as long as one meets the qualification of a tax-free distribution. To meet that qualification, one must have had a Roth IRA for more than five years and be over the age of 59 1/2, deceased, or disabled. The longer the money can stay in the Roth IRA, the greater the potential benefit. Since Roth IRAs do not have mandatory distributions at age 70 (as traditional IRAs do), the money can accumulate for a longer period of time.

There is also a benefit for individuals who will be using money in their retirement accounts during retirement. Since Roth IRAs are tax-free, and do not have mandatory distribution rules while one is alive, one need only withdraw the amount actually needed during retirement. With a traditional IRA, one would have to withdraw an amount larger than actually needed in order to pay the income tax due on the withdrawal.

High-net-worth individuals and their heirs may also receive a significant potential benefit. It is more advantageous for them to convert a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA and pay the income tax while alive, than to die with a traditional IRA that would require their beneficiaries to pay the estate tax first, and then pay the income tax on the withdrawals after death.

Q: What are some of the most common planning pitfalls that you have noticed? A: Many times clients fail to coordinate all of their documents related to their planning or update their documents to reflect changes in life events. Examples include individuals who still have former spouses as beneficiaries of retirement plans or life insurance policies. In other cases, a well-thought-out estate plan and will have been undermined by a retirement plan with an improper beneficiary designation. It is very important that all financial and estate plans take into account assets that will pass outside of probate as well as those that will pass through either probate or a revocable living trust.

Q: How does life insurance play a role in tax and estate planning? A: Life insurance can either create an estate, or protect an estate. For individuals supporting a family, life insurance is needed to protect the family in the event of the death of a breadwinner. If both husband and wife work, both should have life insurance. For high-net-worth individuals, life insurance can be used to help pay estate taxes.

Barry C. Picker, CPA/PFS, CFP,® is a certified public accountant with the personal financial specialist designation from the AICPA, is a certified financial planner™ licensee, and has a master's of science in taxation from Pace University. Besides being a shareholder in Picker & Auerbach, CPAs, P.C., an accounting and financial-planning firm located in Brooklyn, New York, he regularly consults with other professionals on retirement-planning issues.

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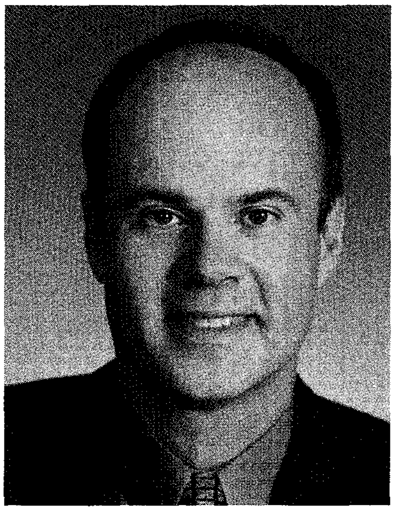
This is especially important in estates that may be illiquid. This could include estates with large retirement accounts. It is detrimental to an estate to have to sell illiquid assets in order to raise cash to pay the estate taxes. It is also detrimental to have to withdraw money from retirement accounts in order to pay the estate taxes, as that withdrawal will trigger income taxes, which will require another withdrawal to pay them—until much of the retirement account is gone, and beneficiaries haven't received a cent.

Q: What is the tax significance of municipal bonds and what are the risks? A: Municipal bonds are obligations of state and local governments. They are not subject to federal income tax and are often referred to as tax-free bonds. They are also not subject to state and local income tax of the state of issuance.

These bonds generally pay lower interest than bonds that would be subject to income tax, so they are advantageous for individuals who are in higher tax brackets. That is because they will receive a higher after-tax income on the tax-free bonds than they would on bonds that pay income subject to income tax. But individuals in lower tax brackets would usually receive a higher after-tax income on taxable bonds than on municipal bonds. All bonds are subject to market fluctuations. They tend to decrease in value if prevailing interest rates increase. However, unless there is a default, the bond will pay its face value at the maturity date.



RICK RODGERS

Q: What are some of the most common tax-related pitfalls that you have noticed? A: Tax-efficient investing requires active involvement such as evaluating the tax efficiency of a mutual fund before investing. You need to monitor portfolios so losses are harvested to offset gains. In addition, you must pay attention to holding periods to ensure the asset has been held at least twelve months to qualify for taxation at the lower capital-gains rates.

Start by screening your funds for performance, then for tax efficiency. Separate your list of funds that meet your performance criteria by tax efficiency. Funds that aren't tax efficient can be held in tax-deferred accounts. You don't need or want to be in a tax-efficient fund with your tax-deferred accounts. There are trade-offs between performance and tax efficiency. Returns tend to be lower in tax-efficient funds. You want the managers to be more aggressive in the tax-deferred account where they can make changes quickly without consideration of tax consequences.

One of the biggest mistakes investors make is failing to harvest losses in their portfolios. People think that when an investment is worth less than they paid for it, they won't lose any money unless they sell it. Start by evaluating the investment. If you had cash today, would you still invest in that same position, or are there other opportunities that look better? If the answer is no, take the loss and reinvest elsewhere—the loss could be worth thousands in saved taxes.

Q: What are the most important things financial advisors need to tell their clients about taxes? A: High-net-worth households have traditionally used their accountants for tax advice and their financial advisors for investment advice. But both need to work together to get the most tax-efficient investment strategies and lower income taxes overall. Tax planning is an ongoing process. Too many people wait until March, when it's too late to think about income-tax planning. One of the financial adviser's roles should be to educate and inform the client on various ways for them to reduce tax liability, and then consult with the accountant on the best strategies to implement.

Charitable giving is another important tool that financial advisers can use to reduce taxes. This will often involve the client's estate-planning attorney, who can offer advice on charitable remainder trusts, charitable lead trusts, and other techniques. The attorney becomes the third member of a cohesive tax-planning team.

Q: What is the tax significance of municipal bonds and what are the risks? A: Municipal-bond interest is usually exempt from federal income tax and, in some cases, state and local taxes as well. Municipal bonds are generally considered to be second in safety behind bonds backed by the federal government. These two features make investing in municipal bonds very popular. There are three points to remember when considering municipal bonds are (1) municipal bonds are not risk-free; (2) the alternatives that may be better for

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your particular circumstance; and (3) how municipal bonds will fit in with your overall investment and financial plan.

Municipal bonds carry the same two major risks that all fixed-income investments contain. The first is interest-rate risk. Bond values move up or down when interest rates rise and fall. Bond values typically decline when interest rates rise. You would have to discount the price of your old five percent bond to compete with new bonds paying six percent. The reverse is true when interest rates decline. Longer-term bonds tend to fluctuate in value more than shorter-term bonds because at maturity, the bond will return to face value. To compensate for interest-rate risk, longer bonds typically have higher yields than short- or intermediate-term bond funds.

The second risk is credit risk, also known as default risk. Municipal bonds are typically debt obligations of state and local agencies that are dependent on tax receipts. There is a lot of concern in today's economic environment because lower tax revenue raises the risk of default. Moody's Investors Service recently assigned a negative outlook to the creditworthiness of all local governments in the United States.

A safer alternative may be to use intermediate-term municipal bond funds instead of individual bonds. Avoid the long-term bond funds that hold maturities of ten years or more. They are more vulnerable to increasing interest rates. Intermediate-term bond funds or intermediate-term tax-exempt ETFs (exchange-traded funds) are likely to be less volatile.

Yields on municipal bonds are generally less than on taxable bonds. That's why it's important to have a financial plan in place and a strategy to implement it so you can easily determine if municipal bonds have a place in that strategy. Municipal bonds should only be considered in the context of your overall financial and investment plan.

Rick Rodgers, CFP,® is a retirement-planning expert and keynote speaker. He is the author of "The New Three-Legged Stool: A Tax Efficient Approach to Retirement Planning," a wealth manager, and president of Rodgers & Associates. Rodgers is the financial expert for WGAL-TV in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He was most recently interviewed on WITF's "Smart Talk" and WPUL's "Express Yourself."

TWILA SLESNICK AND JOHN SUTTLE

Q: What do you tell clients who think the rules may change? A: This is a good question to start with because it underscores the fear we all have of making a wrong decision, not just about finances, but about any aspect of our lives. We advise our clients to work with current tax laws and plan their strategies accordingly. When and if the laws change, we'll find the best way to adjust those strategies.

Q: What are the most tax-favorable business structures for business owners and what are the risks? A: There are advantages and disadvantages to each:

Sole Proprietorship. Formation—just hang out your shingle. Advantages include simplicity, low cost, and no separate income-tax return. Disadvantages are unlimited liability, the fact that the business may only have only one owner, and it must pay federal and state income taxes through estimates (as opposed to withholding).

C Corporation. Formation—file articles with the secretary of state.

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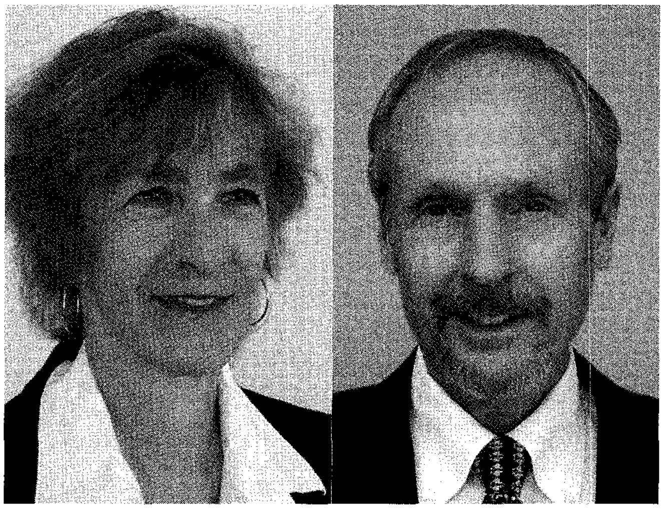
Advantages are limited liability (though you are still liable for your own torts). You may also have multiple owners, and conduct more sophisticated businesses requiring outside capital. You may deduct reimbursement of out-of-pocket medical expenses under a non-discriminatory plan, and pay owner-employee income taxes through withholding. Finally, there is no limitation on who may be an owner or on the number of owners. Disadvantages include costs of formation and a potential "double tax" (once at the corporate level and once at the shareholder level). You must file a separate income-tax return, and pay a minimum franchise tax in most states. Issuance of stock for services is taxable, and dissolution may be taxable.

S Corporation. Formation—same as for a C corporation, plus S election. Advantages are the same as for a C corporation, except medical expense reimbursements are taxable to owner-employees. On the downside: a separate return is required; there is a state tax (but usually at a lower rate than for a C corporation); and only individuals (excluding non-resident aliens) and certain trusts may be owners. The fact that the number of shareholders is limited to a hundred and the costs of formation may also be considered drawbacks.



General Partnership. Formation—handshake, but you may want a written agreement. There are many advantages, including its simplicity and the fact that it accommodates two or more owners. It's also easier to add a partner (owner) without triggering an income tax, and there's no limitation on who may be an owner or on the number of owners. There's only one level of taxation (at the partner level—generally proportionate to ownership), and generally no state franchise tax. Disadvantages include unlimited liability and that a separate return is required. Also, partners must pay their income taxes through estimates.

Limited Liability Company (LLC). Formation—file articles with the secretary of state. Advantages are limited liability (though you are still liable for your own torts), and there is one level of taxation (it's taxed like partnerships). There are no limitations on who may be an owner or on the number of owners, and it's easier to add an owner (member) without triggering income tax. Disadvantages are that you must file a separate return, that owners must pay their income taxes through estimates, and that some states impose income tax or gross-receipts tax on LLCs, as well as costs.

Q: Describe a 1031 exchange and who would benefit from this strategy. A: In a 1031 exchange, you exchange appreciated real property for other real property. It works well if you are "trading up" (going into a more expensive property than you are giving up), and are either a "hands-on" property manager or have enough equity to acquire 100 percent of a "triple net lease" property with a good tenant and no management responsibility. Details are typically handled by your broker, an "accommodator," and your tax advisor. Properly executed, the transaction is tax free to you. Time constraints make it important to begin planning even before you list your property for sale.

Q: What is the most common tax-related pitfall that you have noticed? A: Failing to file your return on time. The penalty is five percent per month. If you file on time, even if you don't pay all of the tax due, the penalty drops from five percent to 0.5 percent.

Twila Slesnick, Ph.D., is a partner with Slesnicks & Co. and is co-author, with John Suttle, of "IRAs, 401(k)s and Other Retirement Plans: Taking Your Money Out" (Nolo). She specializes in tax and retirement planning, and does pension-plan consulting for individuals and small businesses. **John Suttle** is an attorney and certified public accountant who is also certified by the California State Bar as a tax specialist.

IN SUMMARY

Professional financial advisors can offer a variety of strategies for your unique goals. This article does not pertain to the investment objectives, financial situation, and particular needs of any specific person. There is no guarantee that the strategies and advice presented will result in success. Investing involves risks, including the potential loss of principal. Lincoln Financial has the tools and expertise for helping clients meet their goals. **Visit LincolnFinancial.com to find out more.**

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ics—including Matarić—believe that the uncanny-valley effect is real, and should be respected. For that reason, Matarić's robots all share features that humans can relate to but that are also distinctly machinelike. For some critics, however, the very premise of social robots appears flawed, and even dangerous. Sherry Turkle, a professor at M.I.T. who has expertise in psychology and sociology, is concerned about both the stated need for robots and, she says, the risks they pose to "the most vulnerable populations—children and elders." Her concerns aren't confined to humanoid robots, like Hanson's, but extend even to those that are clearly machines. "The simplicity of the robot is not the point," she said. "The paradox is that you can get more attachment with less, so the more simple robots can pose even greater dangers."

Thirty years ago, Turkle began studying the impact of sophisticated technologies, including virtual-reality computer games and robots, on emotional development in children and social relationships among adults. "I am not a Luddite," Turkle said. "But there is no upside to being socialized by a robot." Based on her observation of groups of different ages, Turkle has found that "children and the elderly start to relate to the object as a person. They begin to love it, and nurture it, and feel they have to attend to the robot's inner state." With this attachment and projection of their emotions, Turkle says, people begin to seek reciprocity, wanting the robot to care for them. "We were wired through evolution to feel that when something looks us in the eye, then someone is at home in it."

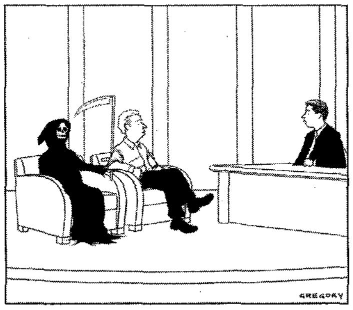
Robots, Turkle argues, risk distorting the meaning of relationships, the bonds of love, and the types of emotional accommodation required to form authentic human attachments. She questions whether robots are necessary in the settings that Matarić and others are exploring. "What human purposes are served by fostering these attachments?" Turkle asks. "The benefits have to be extraordinary, and, as far as I'm concerned, the jury is still out. You are dealing in deception about what is fundamentally human—the nature of conversation, attachment, nurturing." She is not convinced that the elderly in nursing homes need robots. "Why not people?" And she is not convinced that robots serve as a bridge for autistic children to learn how to connect with family or friends. Only a small number of children have participated in studies, Turkle notes, and there are no data on long-term effects. And while Turkle does not doubt the good intentions of roboticists like Matarić, she points out that the direction, if not the purpose, of their research is to produce a robot that can function independently of a human therapist. "Is it something a robot can really do that a person cannot?" she asks. "Why is a machine touching something in us that is so appealing?"

In Turkle's interviews with people who interact with robots, she has been struck by how many state that they "can't trust people," and that the robot offers a safe and secure relationship. "We need to really think through now where we are headed with social robots, whether we really don't have people for these jobs." The idea that robots will teach people to relate to others, she says, is as fallacious as the argument that e-mail facilitates telephone conversation and then direct discussions. "People lock into the place where they can hide and feel safe," she said. "And while we know this with computers, we seem ready to move ahead with robots that are designed to perform in a way so that a person believes there is somebody at home. If the patient actually learns something about himself, then I could imagine that these objects would be valuable. But that is not proven. Right now, it's a giant social experiment with real risks."

Matarić is aware that intelligent social robots raise worries about emotional impact. She and her team, in the course of their research, have asked, What happens if a robot breaks down, or is taken away, after the person invests the robot with the qualities of a grandchild or a companion? What if a user begins to treat the robot like a slave, and then extends this destructive behavior to a family member or a friend? And, even if the machines are unaware of morality, robots must be prepared to act ethically. Her team is trying to envisage future ethical dilemmas. For example, if a patient being assisted suddenly needs emergency attention, what is the robot's responsibility? Matarić is trying to create independent robots that are able to perform the tasks of human caregivers and are capable of displaying empathy toward patients. "But robotic interaction should not replace human interaction," she said. "It should only improve it." ♦

CONTEST

CARTOON KIT



Create your own cartoon using characters and props drawn by the *New Yorker* cartoonist Alex Gregory. Our five favorites will be featured in a slide show on newyorker.com.

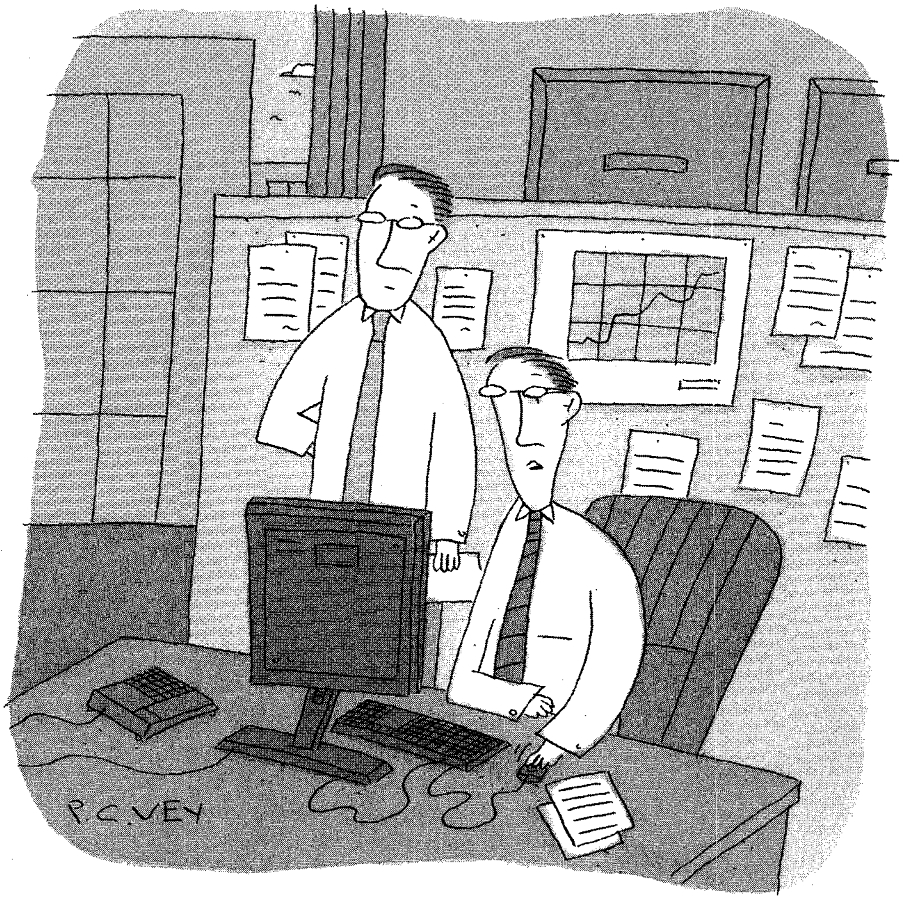
By registering for Cartoon Kit, you get a chance at a trip for two to New York and a tour of the office led by our cartoon editor, Robert Mankoff. For complete rules and to enter,

newyorker.com/go/cartoonkit

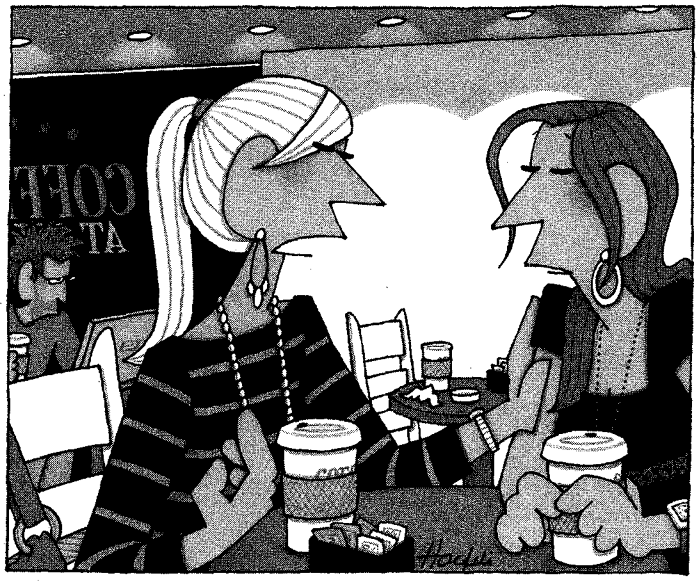
For more details, see page 93.

NEWYORKER.COM

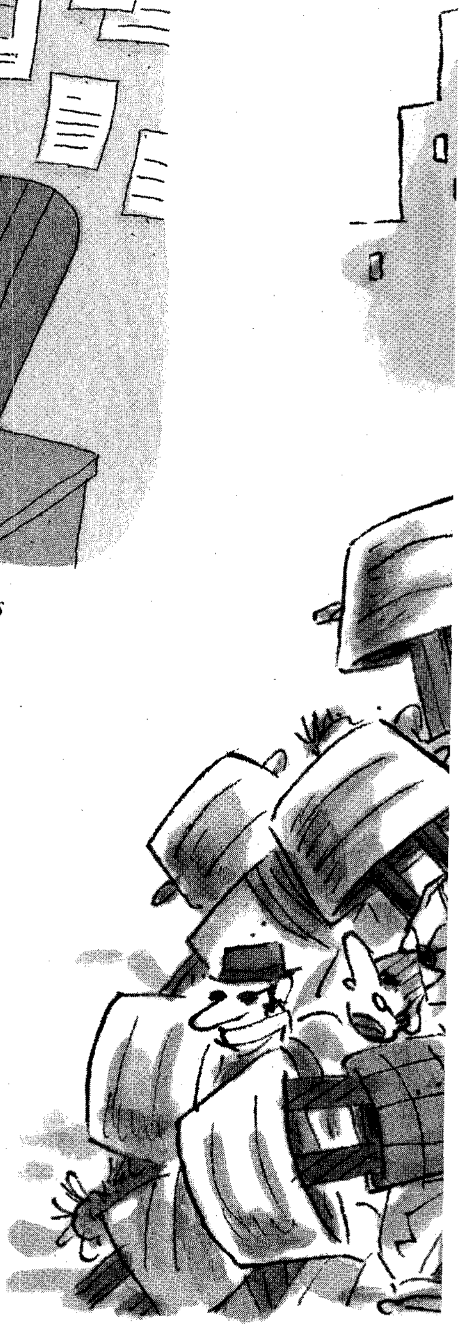
THE FUNNIES

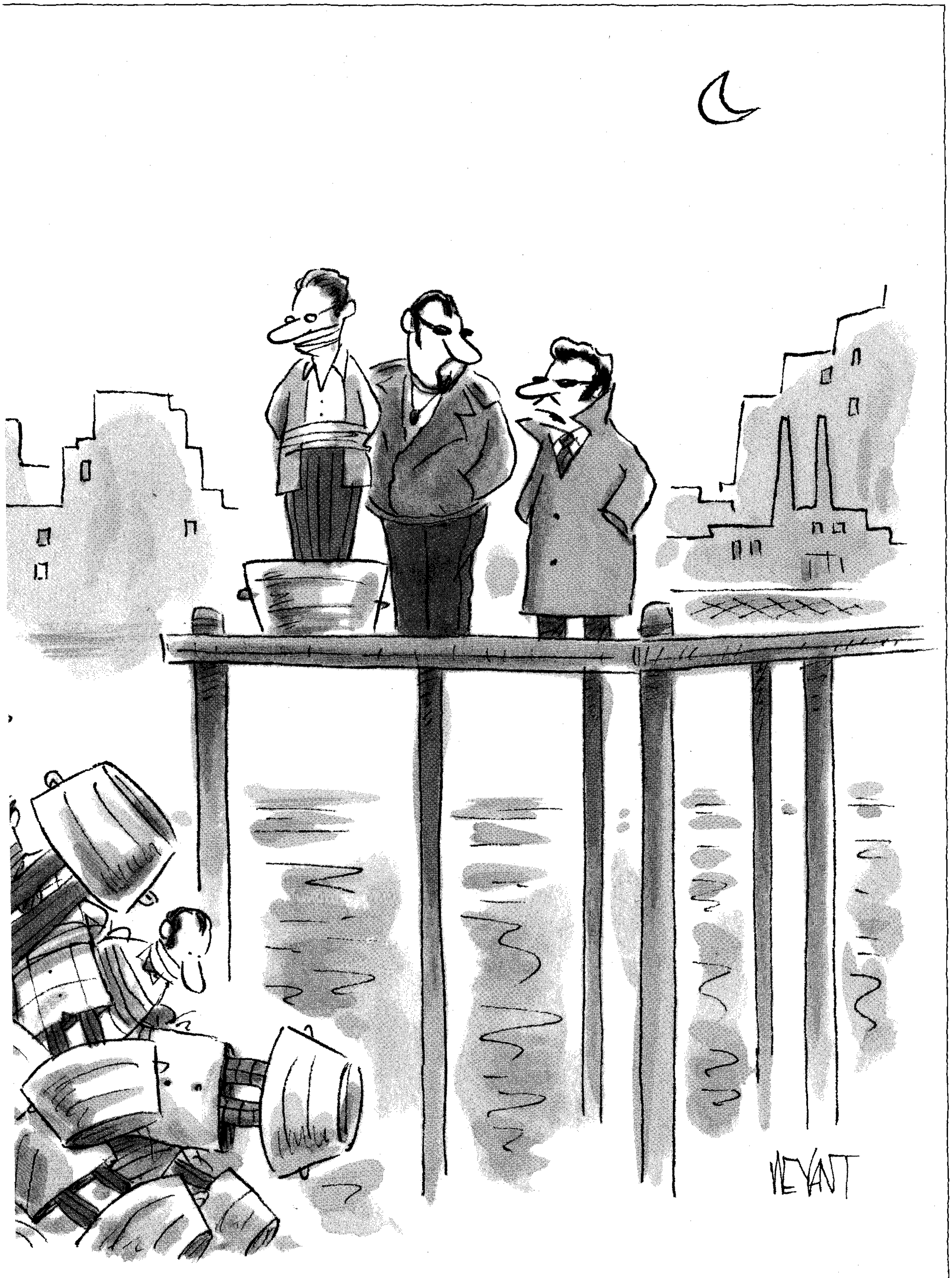


"I don't get it—last time I jiggled the mouse this way we made a 16.45-per-cent profit."

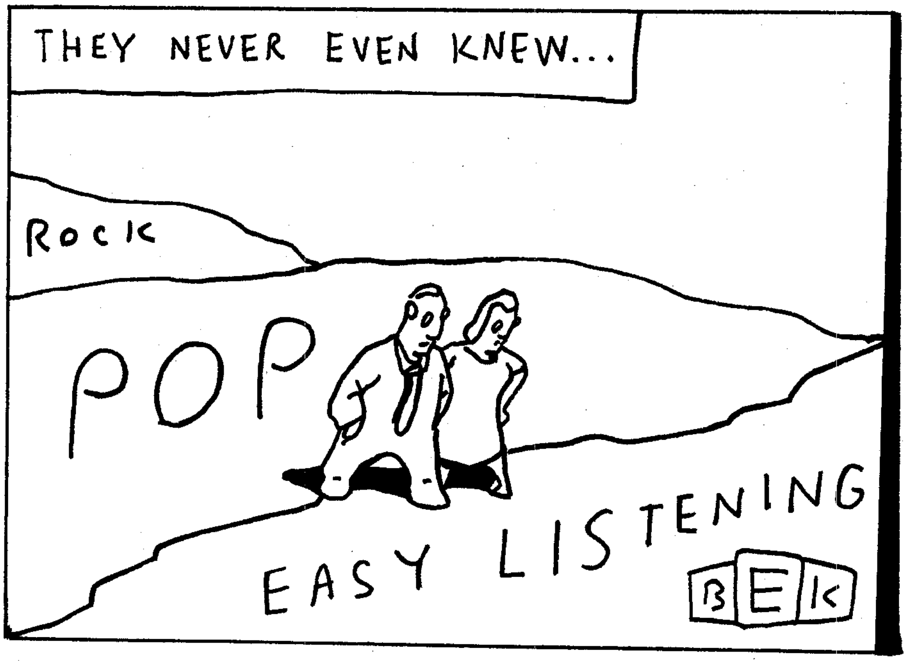


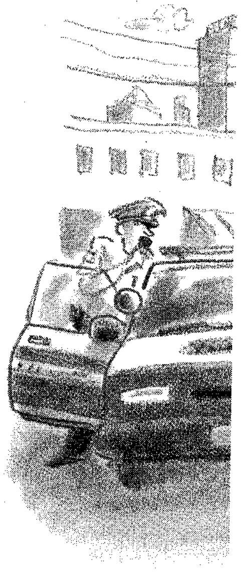
"Talk to me. You have wounds. I have salt."

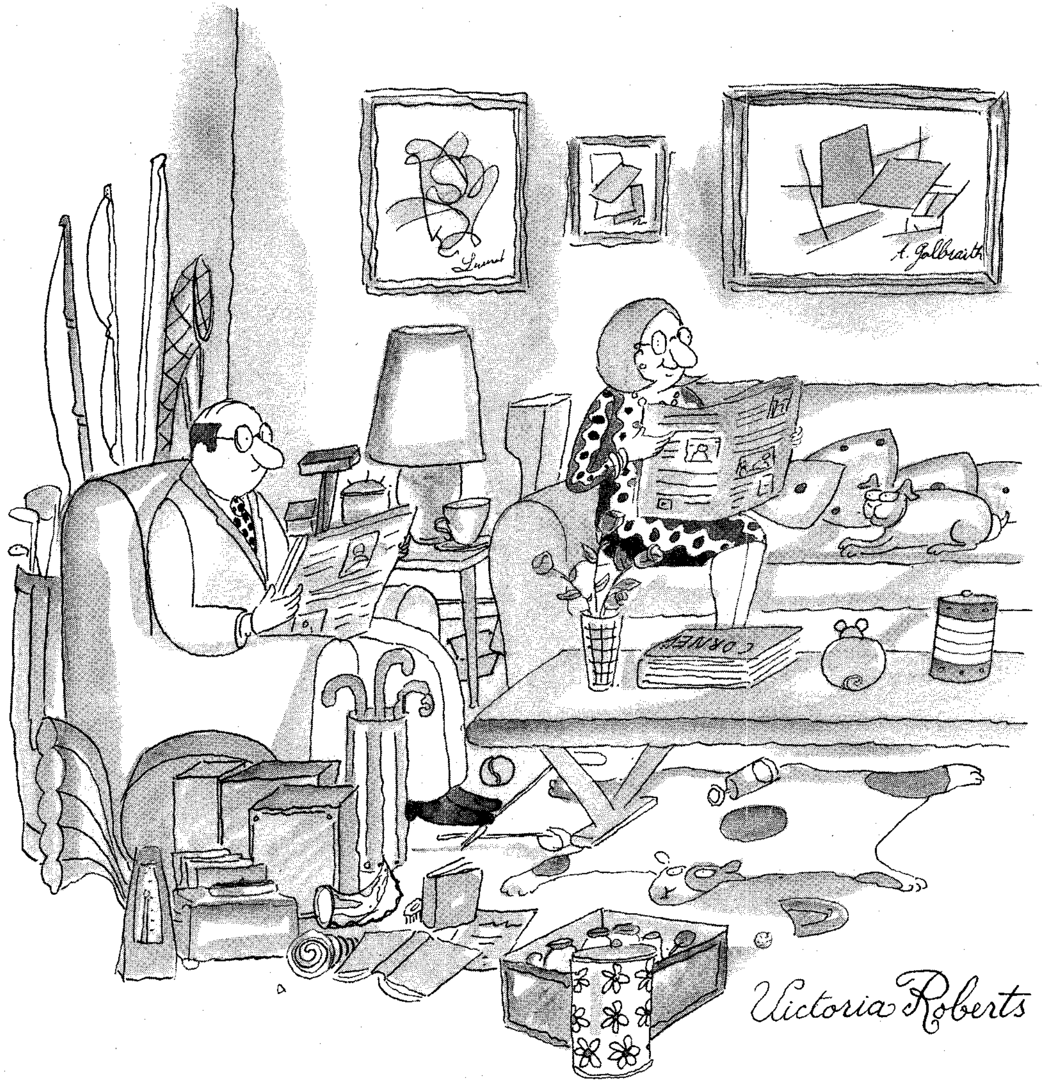




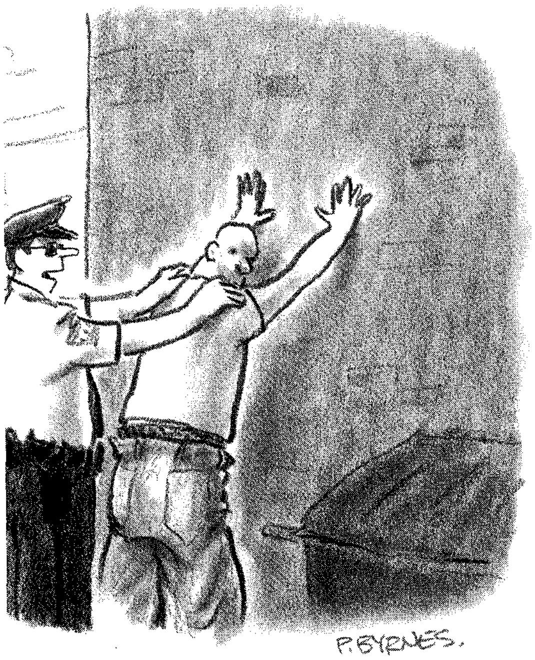
"I'm thinking it might be time to find another pier."


THEY NEVER EVEN KNEW...
ROCK
POP
EASY LISTENING
BEK

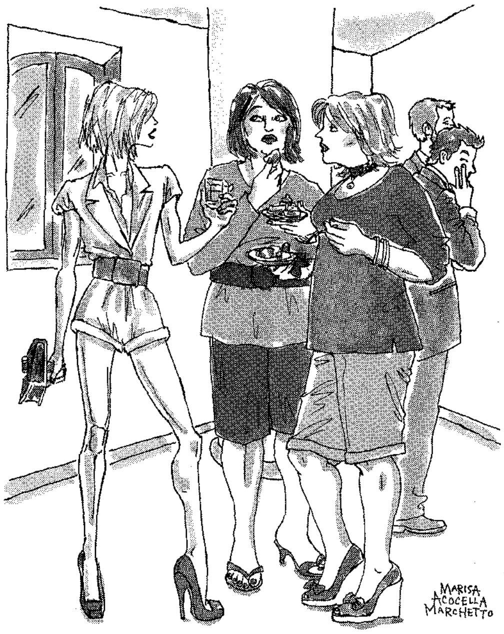



Victoria Roberts

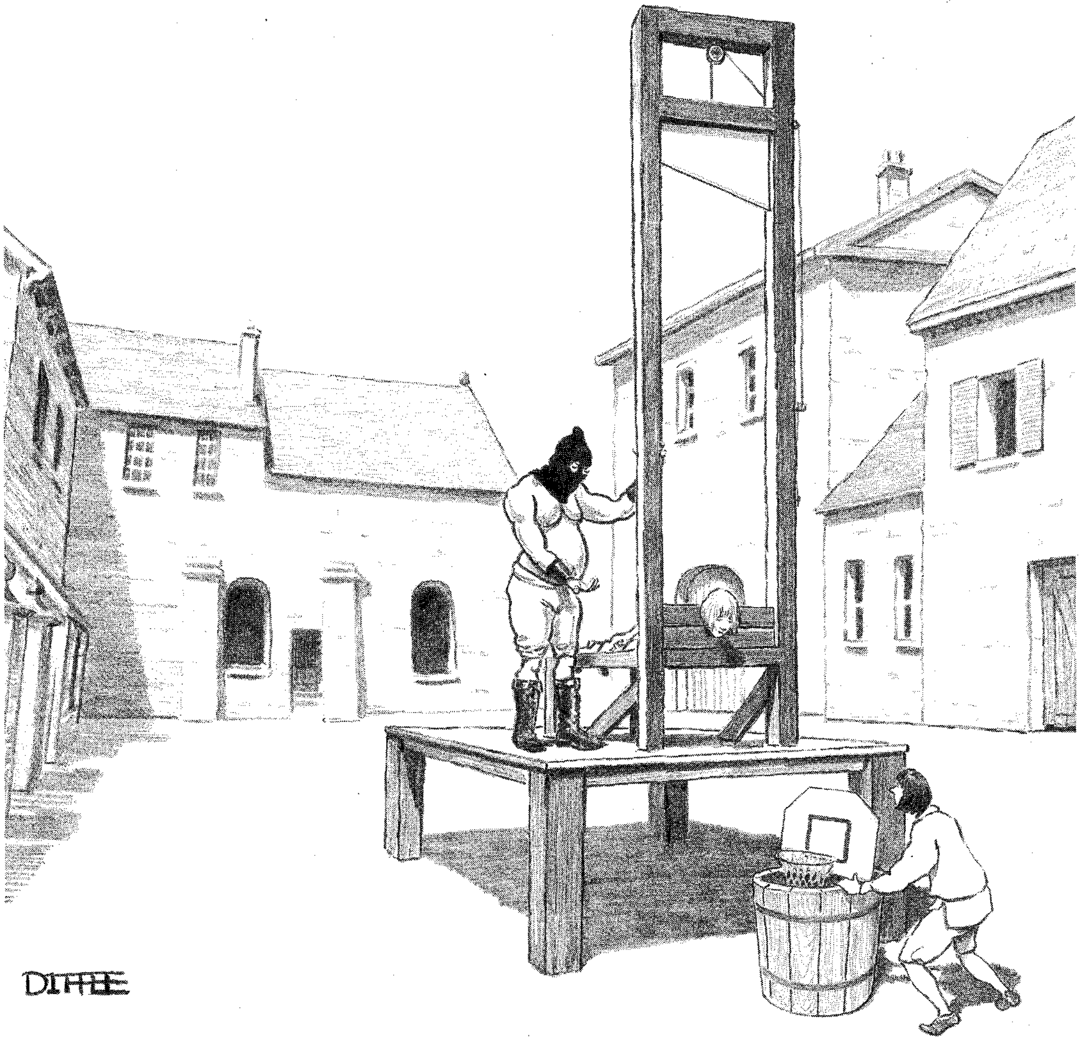
"You know what I want for our twentieth anniversary? A Dumpster."

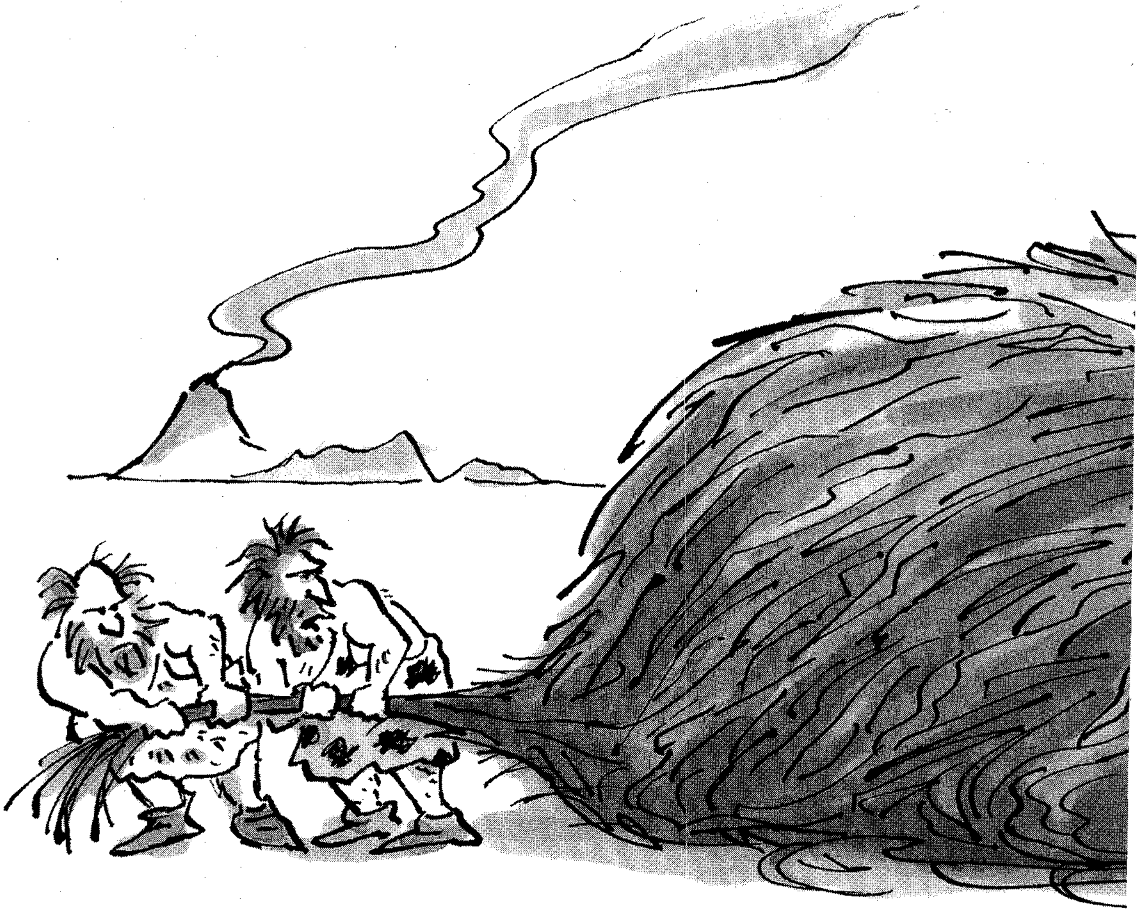


“You have a lot of tension in your shoulders.”

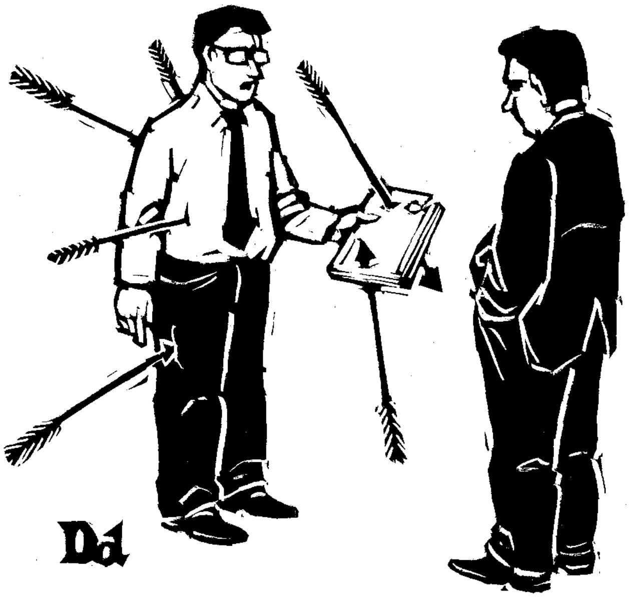

MARISA ACOCELLA MARCHETTO

“Why is it that no one tells you when you get too fat, but everyone tells you when you get too thin?”

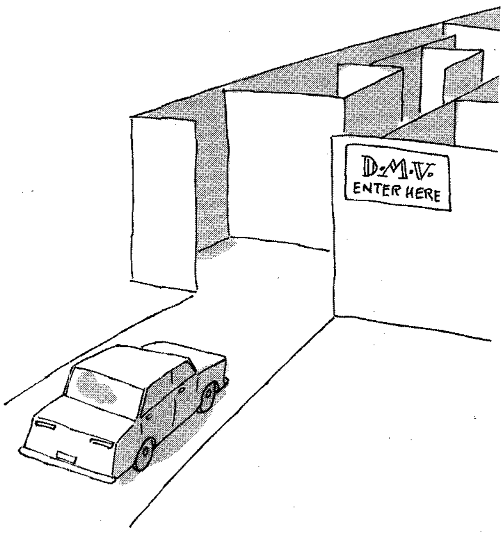


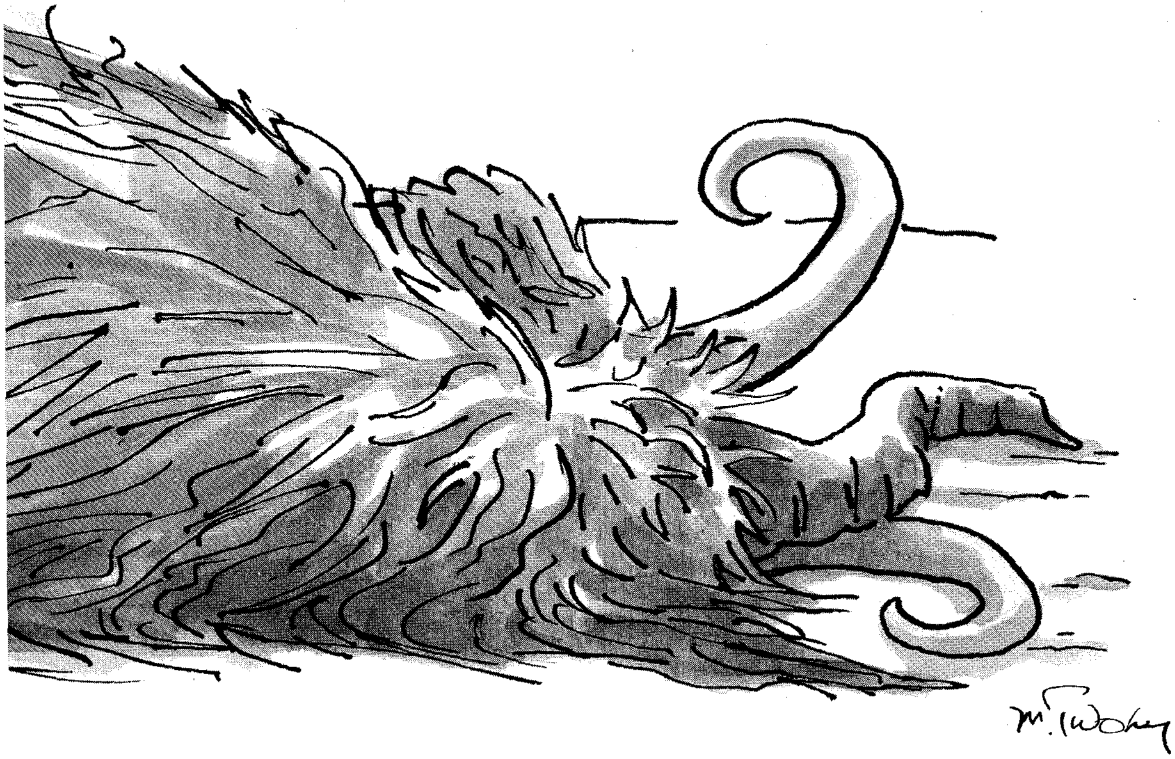


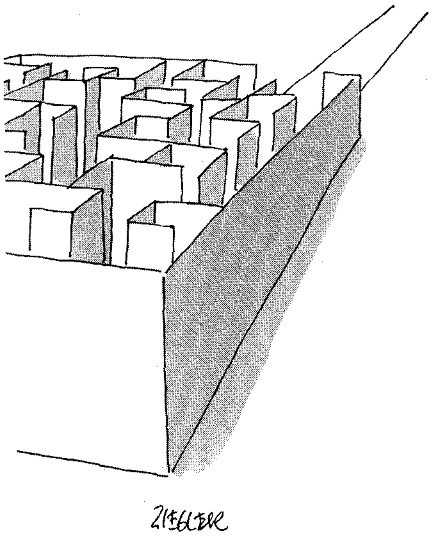
"Never hunt when you're hungry."

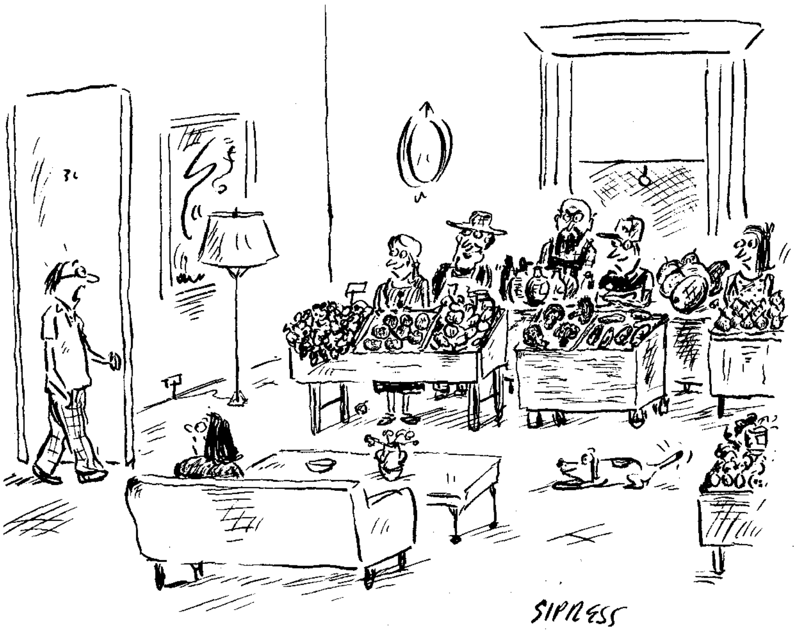


"Legal and accounting were O.K. with it, but I had trouble getting it past archery."

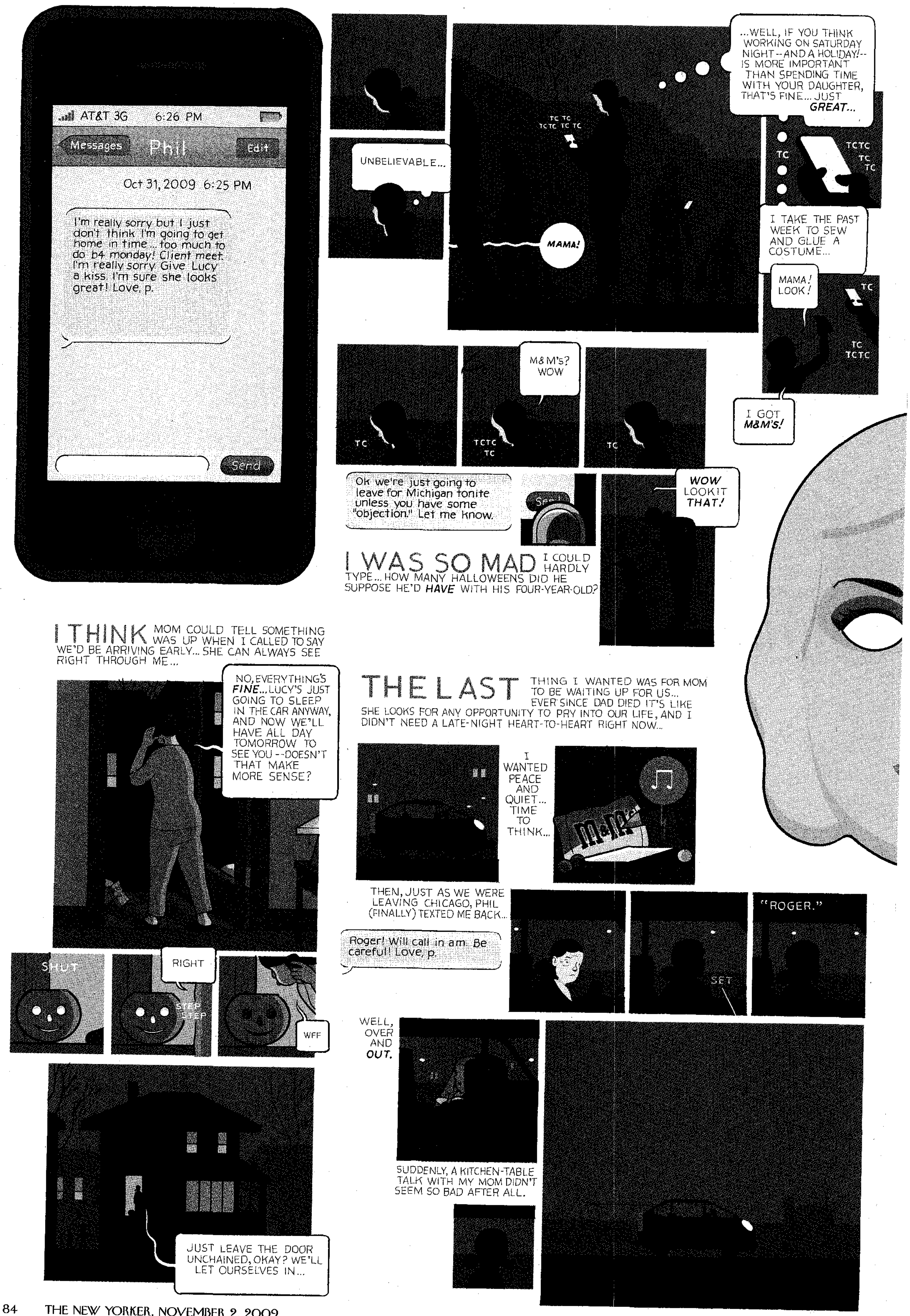

D.M.V.
ENTER HERE







"Oh, no—not another farmers' market!"



AT&T 3G 6:26 PM
Messages
Phil
Edit

Oct 31, 2009 6:25 PM

I'm really sorry but I just don't think I'm going to get home in time... too much to do b4 monday! Client meet. I'm really sorry Give Lucy a kiss. I'm sure she looks great! Love, p.

Send
TC TC TCTC TC TC
UNBELIEVABLE...
MAMA!
...WELL, IF YOU THINK WORKING ON SATURDAY NIGHT--AND A HOLIDAY!--IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SPENDING TIME WITH YOUR DAUGHTER, THAT'S FINE... JUST ***GREAT...***
TCTC TC TC
TC
I TAKE THE PAST WEEK TO SEW AND GLUE A COSTUME...
MAMA! LOOK!
TC
TC TCTC
I GOT ***M&M'S!***
TC
TCTC TC
M&M'S? WOW
TC

Ok we're just going to leave for Michigan tonite unless you have some "objection." Let me know.

Send
WOW LOOKIT ***THAT!***

I WAS SO MAD I COULD HARDLY TYPE... HOW MANY HALLOWEENS DID HE SUPPOSE HE'D ***HAVE*** WITH HIS FOUR-YEAR-OLD?

I THINK MOM COULD TELL SOMETHING WAS UP WHEN I CALLED TO SAY WE'D BE ARRIVING EARLY... SHE CAN ALWAYS SEE RIGHT THROUGH ME...

NO, EVERYTHING'S ***FINE***... LUCY'S JUST GOING TO SLEEP IN THE CAR ANYWAY, AND NOW WE'LL HAVE ALL DAY TOMORROW TO SEE YOU--DOESN'T THAT MAKE MORE SENSE?
SHUT
RIGHT
STEP STEP
WFF
JUST LEAVE THE DOOR UNCHAINED, OKAY? WE'LL LET OURSELVES IN...

THE LAST THING I WANTED WAS FOR MOM TO BE WAITING UP FOR US... EVER SINCE DAD DIED IT'S LIKE SHE LOOKS FOR ANY OPPORTUNITY TO PRY INTO OUR LIFE, AND I DIDN'T NEED A LATE-NIGHT HEART-TO-HEART RIGHT NOW...

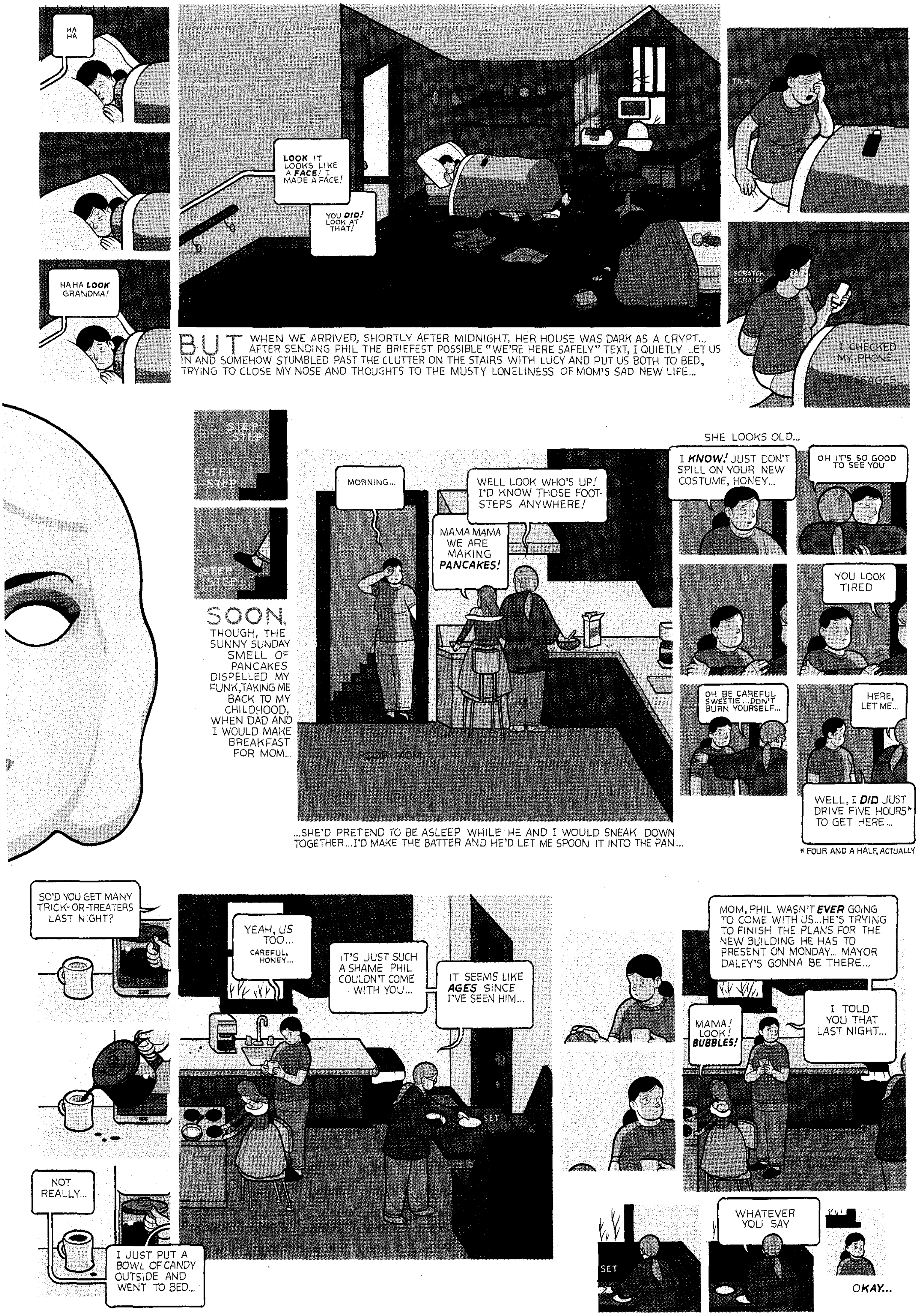
I WANTED PEACE AND QUIET... TIME TO THINK...

THEN, JUST AS WE WERE LEAVING CHICAGO, PHIL (FINALLY) TEXTED ME BACK...

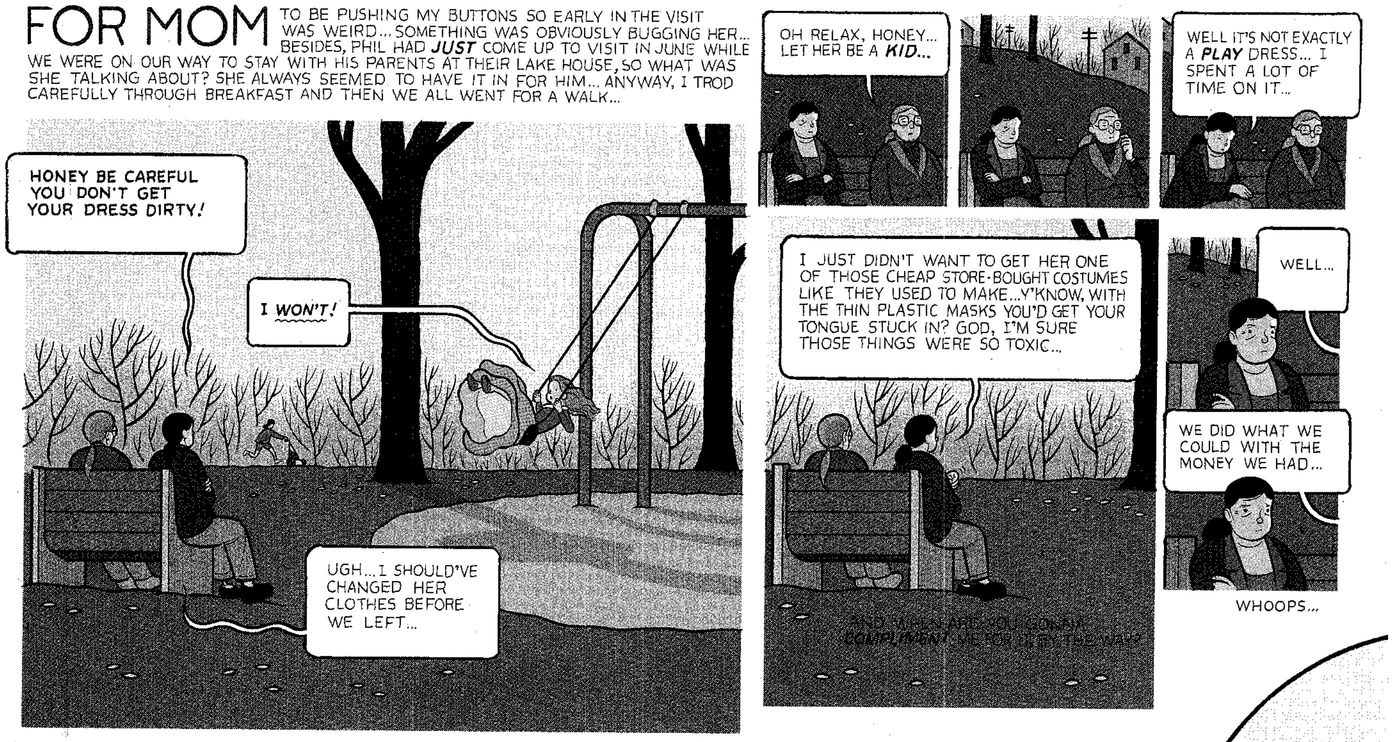
Roger! Will call in am. Be careful! Love, p.

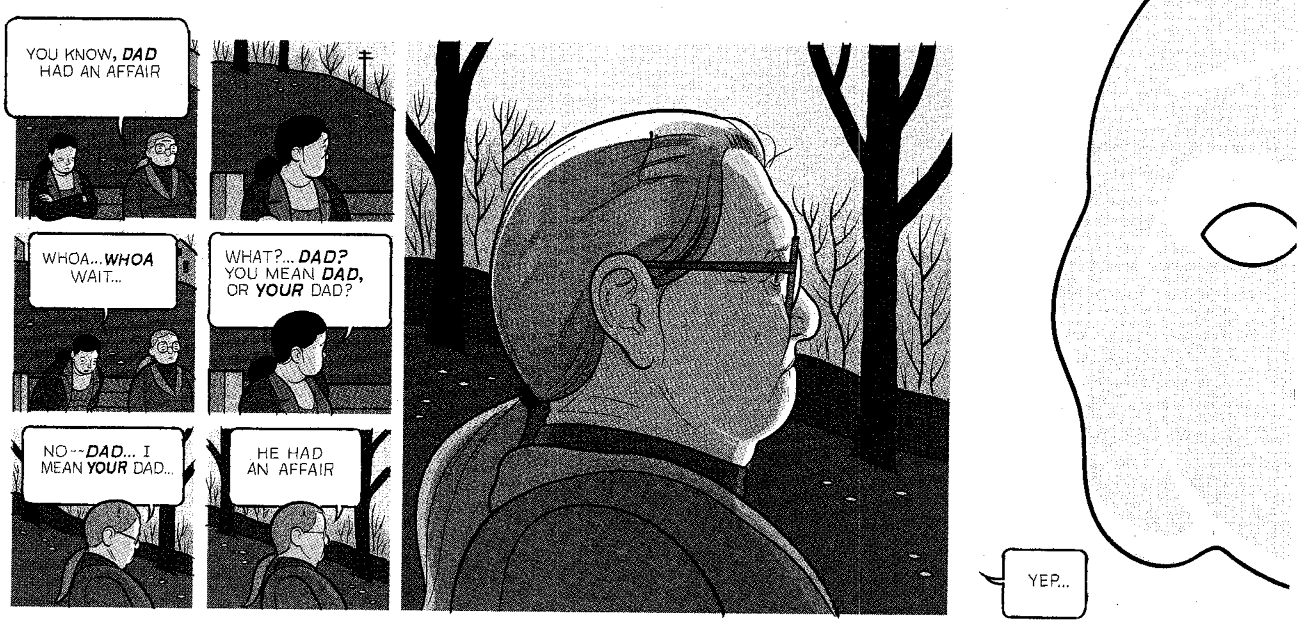
WELL, OVER AND ***OUT.***

SUDDENLY, A KITCHEN-TABLE TALK WITH MY MOM DIDN'T SEEM SO BAD AFTER ALL.


HA HA
HA HA LOOK GRANDMA!
LOOK IT LOOKS LIKE A FACE! I MADE A FACE!
YOU DID! LOOK AT THAT!
BUT WHEN WE ARRIVED, SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT, HER HOUSE WAS DARK AS A CRYPT... AFTER SENDING PHIL THE BRIEFEST POSSIBLE "WE'RE HERE SAFELY" TEXT, I QUIETLY LET US IN AND SOMEHOW STUMBLED PAST THE CLUTTER ON THE STAIRS WITH LUCY AND PUT US BOTH TO BED, TRYING TO CLOSE MY NOSE AND THOUGHTS TO THE MUSTY LONELINESS OF MOM'S SAD NEW LIFE...
TNK
SCRATCH SCRATCH
I CHECKED MY PHONE...
NO MESSAGES...
STEP STEP
STEP STEP
STEP STEP
SOON, THOUGH, THE SUNNY SUNDAY SMELL OF PANCAKES DISPELLED MY FUNK, TAKING ME BACK TO MY CHILDHOOD, WHEN DAD AND I WOULD MAKE BREAKFAST FOR MOM...
MORNING...
WELL LOOK WHO'S UP! I'D KNOW THOSE FOOTSTEPS ANYWHERE!
MAMA MAMA WE ARE MAKING PANCAKES!
POOR MOM.
...SHE'D PRETEND TO BE ASLEEP WHILE HE AND I WOULD SNEAK DOWN TOGETHER... I'D MAKE THE BATTER AND HE'D LET ME SPOON IT INTO THE PAN...
SHE LOOKS OLD...
I KNOW! JUST DON'T SPILL ON YOUR NEW COSTUME, HONEY...
OH IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU
YOU LOOK TIRED
OH BE CAREFUL SWEETIE ...DON'T BURN YOURSELF...
HERE, LET ME...
WELL, I DID JUST DRIVE FIVE HOURS* TO GET HERE...
* FOUR AND A HALF, ACTUALLY
SO'D YOU GET MANY TRICK-OR-TREATERS LAST NIGHT?
NOT REALLY...
I JUST PUT A BOWL OF CANDY OUTSIDE AND WENT TO BED...
YEAH, US TOO...
CAREFUL, HONEY...
IT'S JUST SUCH A SHAME PHIL COULDN'T COME WITH YOU...
IT SEEMS LIKE AGES SINCE I'VE SEEN HIM...
SET
MOM, PHIL WASN'T EVER GOING TO COME WITH US...HE'S TRYING TO FINISH THE PLANS FOR THE NEW BUILDING HE HAS TO PRESENT ON MONDAY... MAYOR DALEY'S GONNA BE THERE...
MAMA! LOOK! BUBBLES!
I TOLD YOU THAT LAST NIGHT...
SET
WHATEVER YOU SAY
OKAY...

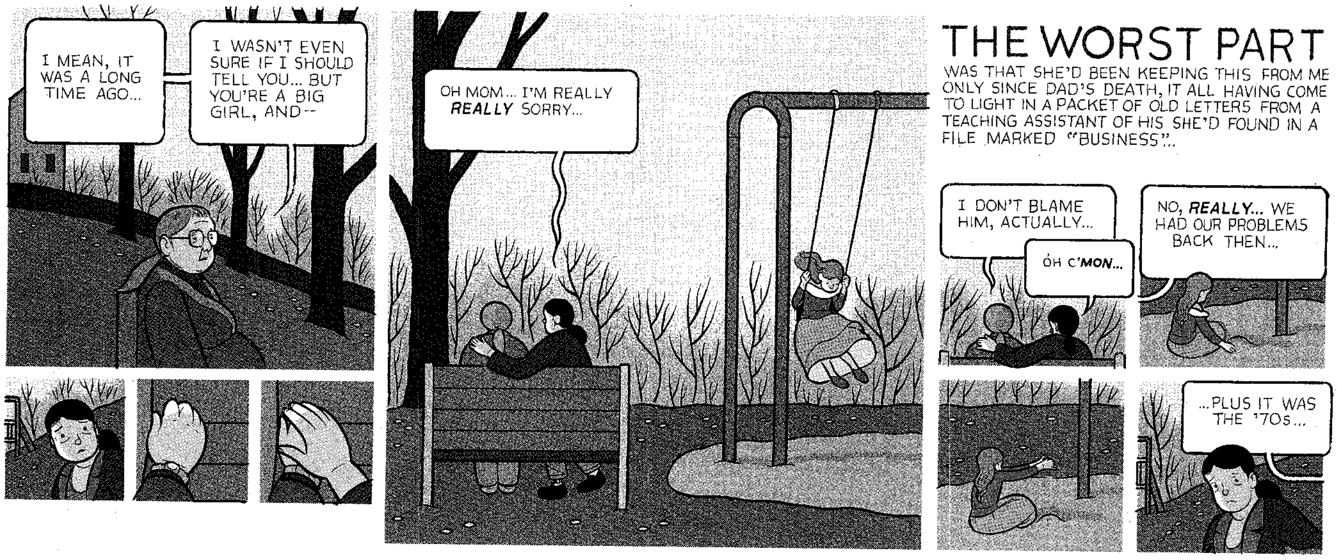
FOR MOM TO BE PUSHING MY BUTTONS SO EARLY IN THE VISIT WAS WEIRD... SOMETHING WAS OBVIOUSLY BUGGING HER... BESIDES, PHIL HAD ***JUST*** COME UP TO VISIT IN JUNE WHILE WE WERE ON OUR WAY TO STAY WITH HIS PARENTS AT THEIR LAKE HOUSE, SO WHAT WAS SHE TALKING ABOUT? SHE ALWAYS SEEMED TO HAVE IT IN FOR HIM... ANYWAY, I TROD CAREFULLY THROUGH BREAKFAST AND THEN WE ALL WENT FOR A WALK...

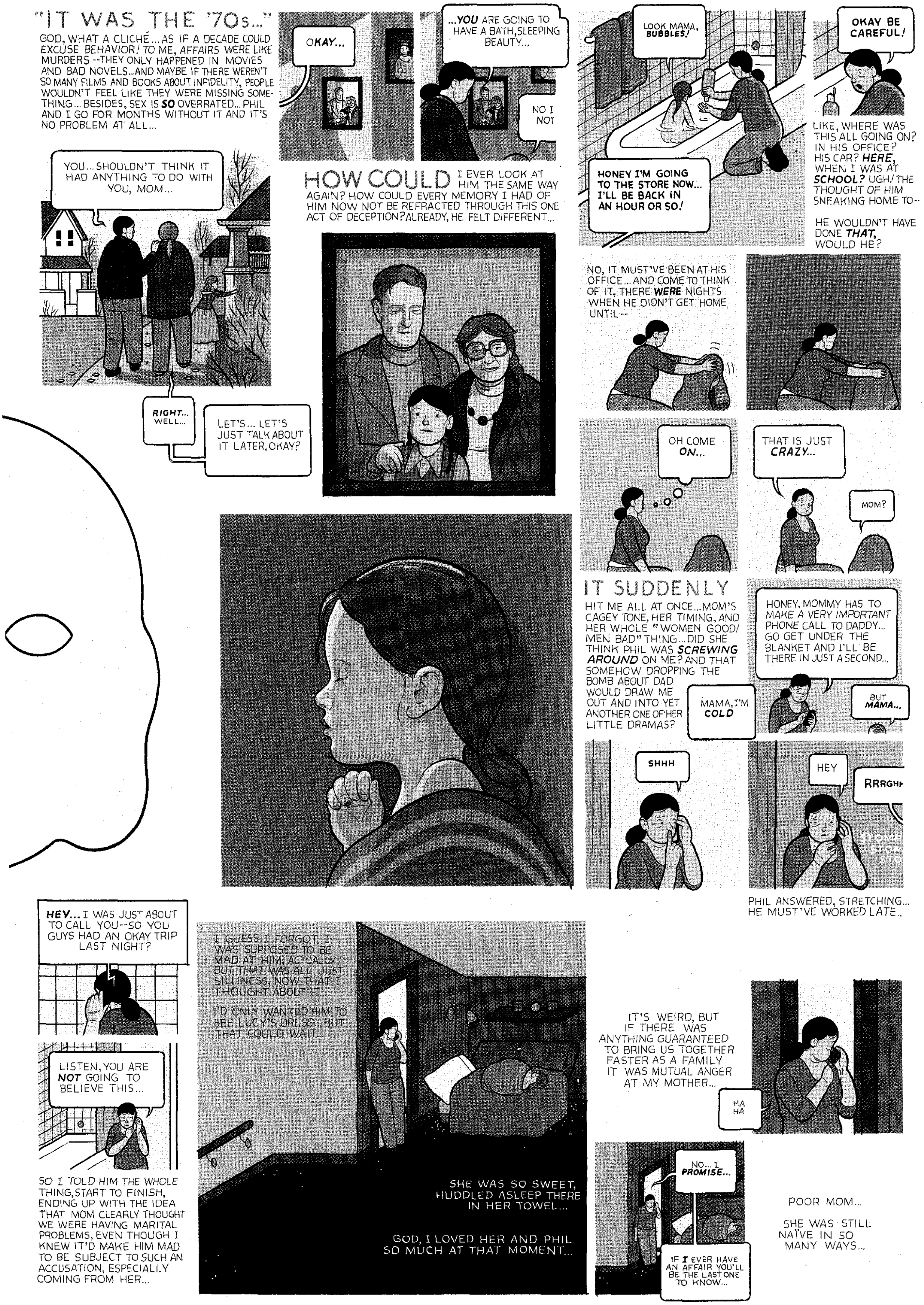

HONEY BE CAREFUL YOU DON'T GET YOUR DRESS DIRTY!
I WON'T!
UGH... I SHOULD'VE CHANGED HER CLOTHES BEFORE WE LEFT...
OH RELAX, HONEY... LET HER BE A KID...
WELL IT'S NOT EXACTLY A PLAY DRESS... I SPENT A LOT OF TIME ON IT...
I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO GET HER ONE OF THOSE CHEAP STORE-BOUGHT COSTUMES LIKE THEY USED TO MAKE... Y'KNOW, WITH THE THIN PLASTIC MASKS YOU'D GET YOUR TONGUE STUCK IN? GOD, I'M SURE THOSE THINGS WERE SO TOXIC...
AND WHEN ARE YOU GONNA COMPLIMENT ME FOR IT, BY THE WAY?
WELL...
WE DID WHAT WE COULD WITH THE MONEY WE HAD...
WHOOPS...


YOU KNOW, DAD HAD AN AFFAIR
WHOA... WHOA WAIT...
WHAT?... DAD? YOU MEAN DAD, OR YOUR DAD?
NO--DAD... I MEAN YOUR DAD...
HE HAD AN AFFAIR
YEP...

LOOKING AT HER SITTING THERE, I FELT THE GAP OF THE MORNING CLOSE BETWEEN US AS SHE FORCED A SMILE THROUGH BITTEN LIPS...

THE WORST PART WAS THAT SHE'D BEEN KEEPING THIS FROM ME ONLY SINCE DAD'S DEATH, IT ALL HAVING COME TO LIGHT IN A PACKET OF OLD LETTERS FROM A TEACHING ASSISTANT OF HIS SHE'D FOUND IN A FILE MARKED "BUSINESS"...

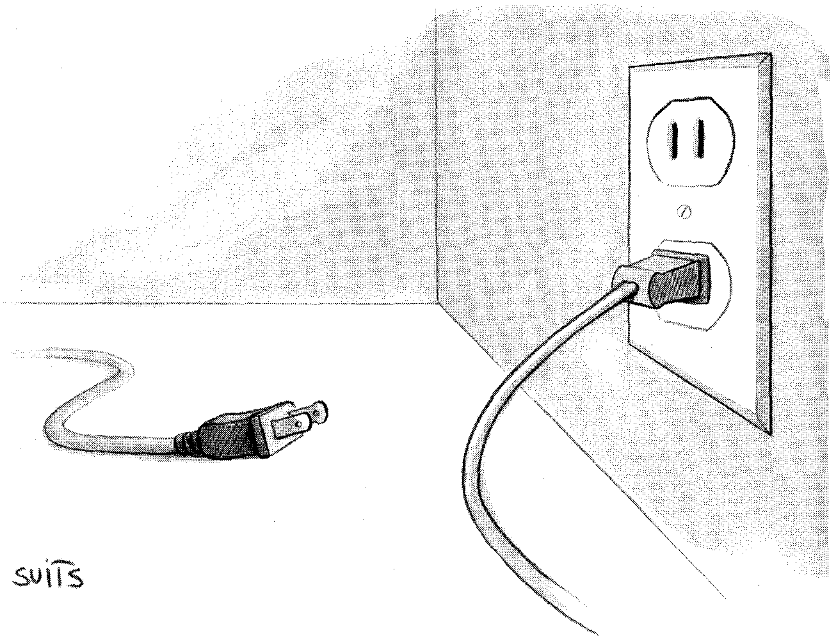

I MEAN, IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO...
I WASN'T EVEN SURE IF I SHOULD TELL YOU... BUT YOU'RE A BIG GIRL, AND--
OH MOM... I'M REALLY SORRY...
I DON'T BLAME HIM, ACTUALLY...
OH C'MON...
NO, REALLY... WE HAD OUR PROBLEMS BACK THEN...
...PLUS IT WAS THE '70s...


"IT WAS THE '70s..."
GOD, WHAT A CLICHÉ... AS IF A DECADE COULD EXCUSE BEHAVIOR! TO ME, AFFAIRS WERE LIKE MURDERS --THEY ONLY HAPPENED IN MOVIES AND BAD NOVELS... AND MAYBE IF THERE WEREN'T SO MANY FILMS AND BOOKS ABOUT INFIDELITY, PEOPLE WOULDN'T FEEL LIKE THEY WERE MISSING SOMETHING... BESIDES, SEX IS SO OVERRATED... PHIL AND I GO FOR MONTHS WITHOUT IT AND IT'S NO PROBLEM AT ALL...
YOU... SHOULDN'T THINK IT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOU, MOM...
RIGHT... WELL...
LET'S... LET'S JUST TALK ABOUT IT LATER, OKAY?
OKAY...
...YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE A BATH, SLEEPING BEAUTY...
NO I NOT
HOW COULD I EVER LOOK AT HIM THE SAME WAY AGAIN? HOW COULD EVERY MEMORY I HAD OF HIM NOW NOT BE REFRACTED THROUGH THIS ONE ACT OF DECEPTION? ALREADY, HE FELT DIFFERENT...
LOOK MAMA, BUBBLES!
HONEY I'M GOING TO THE STORE NOW... I'LL BE BACK IN AN HOUR OR SO!
OKAY BE CAREFUL!
LIKE, WHERE WAS THIS ALL GOING ON? IN HIS OFFICE? HIS CAR? HERE, WHEN I WAS AT SCHOOL? UGH! THE THOUGHT OF HIM SNEAKING HOME TO--
HE WOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT, WOULD HE?
NO, IT MUST'VE BEEN AT HIS OFFICE... AND COME TO THINK OF IT, THERE WERE NIGHTS WHEN HE DIDN'T GET HOME UNTIL--
OH COME ON...
THAT IS JUST CRAZY...
MOM?
IT SUDDENLY HIT ME ALL AT ONCE... MOM'S CAGEY TONE, HER TIMING, AND HER WHOLE "WOMEN GOOD/ MEN BAD" THING... DID SHE THINK PHIL WAS SCREWING AROUND ON ME? AND THAT SOMEHOW DROPPING THE BOMB ABOUT DAD WOULD DRAW ME OUT AND INTO YET ANOTHER ONE OF HER LITTLE DRAMAS?
MAMA, I'M COLD
HONEY, MOMMY HAS TO MAKE A VERY IMPORTANT PHONE CALL TO DADDY... GO GET UNDER THE BLANKET AND I'LL BE THERE IN JUST A SECOND...
BUT MAMA...
SHHH
HEY
RRRGHH
STOMP STOM STO
PHIL ANSWERED, STRETCHING... HE MUST'VE WORKED LATE...
HEY... I WAS JUST ABOUT TO CALL YOU--SO YOU GUYS HAD AN OKAY TRIP LAST NIGHT?
LISTEN, YOU ARE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS...
SO I TOLD HIM THE WHOLE THING, START TO FINISH, ENDING UP WITH THE IDEA THAT MOM CLEARLY THOUGHT WE WERE HAVING MARITAL PROBLEMS, EVEN THOUGH I KNEW IT'D MAKE HIM MAD TO BE SUBJECT TO SUCH AN ACCUSATION, ESPECIALLY COMING FROM HER...
I GUESS I FORGOT I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE MAD AT HIM, ACTUALLY. BUT THAT WAS ALL JUST SILLINESS, NOW THAT I THOUGHT ABOUT IT...
I'D ONLY WANTED HIM TO SEE LUCY'S DRESS... BUT THAT COULD WAIT...
SHE WAS SO SWEET, HUDDLED ASLEEP THERE IN HER TOWEL...
GOD, I LOVED HER AND PHIL SO MUCH AT THAT MOMENT...
IT'S WEIRD, BUT IF THERE WAS ANYTHING GUARANTEED TO BRING US TOGETHER FASTER AS A FAMILY IT WAS MUTUAL ANGER AT MY MOTHER...
HA HA
NO... I PROMISE...
IF I EVER HAVE AN AFFAIR YOU'LL BE THE LAST ONE TO KNOW...
POOR MOM...
SHE WAS STILL NAÏVE IN SO MANY WAYS...

CARTOON I.Q. TEST

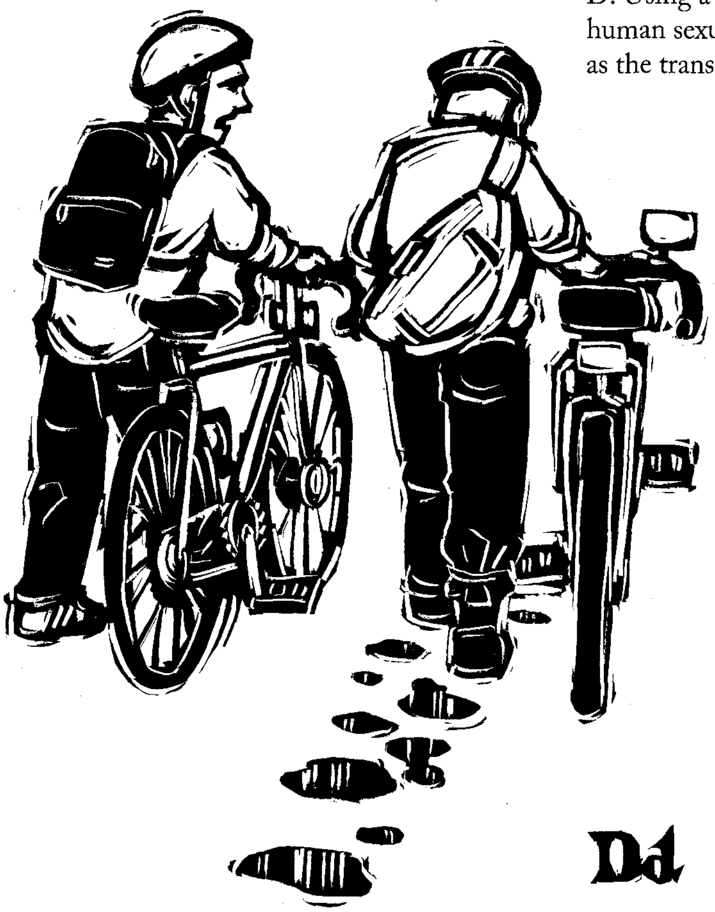
I DON'T GET IT

On occasion, we publish a cartoon so ahead of its time that it boggles the mind, making us reconsider the very essence of comedy itself. We present here five of these confusing cartoons, along with their intended meanings. But watch out—each cartoon is accompanied by three unintended meanings. See if you can determine the real one, or just sigh, give up, and check the answers below.



"Marsha!"

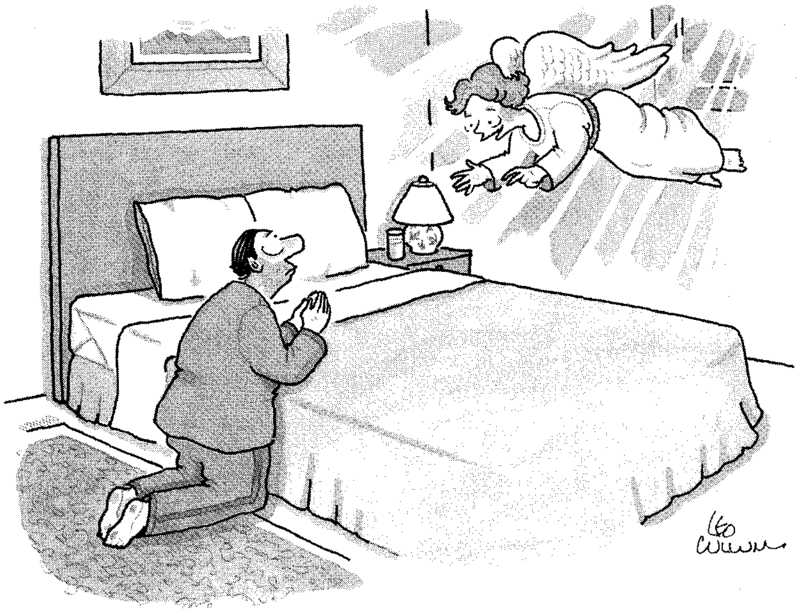
1)
A. The plug is shocked to see someone using a Type A socket with no ground slot, thus increasing the chances of an electrical fire.
B. "Marsha!," like our "23 skiddoo," is a hilarious catchphrase that all the kids are saying today.
C. A talking electrical plug? Now, that's just plain goofy!
D. Using a metaphor, this cartoon shows how funny it is that human sexual intercourse can often feel as cold and mechanical as the transfer of A.C. electricity from a socket to a plug.



"Maybe you shouldn't try to shave on the way to work."

2)
A. The biker is upset because he has shaved off his prized goatee.
B. The biker accidentally nicked his bike's oil reserve while shaving.
C. The biker has attempted to multitask by shaving while riding his bicycle to work, and the result is facial lacerations and comical amounts of blood loss.
D. As the old saying goes, "Shave on the way to work, you're a Grade A jerk."

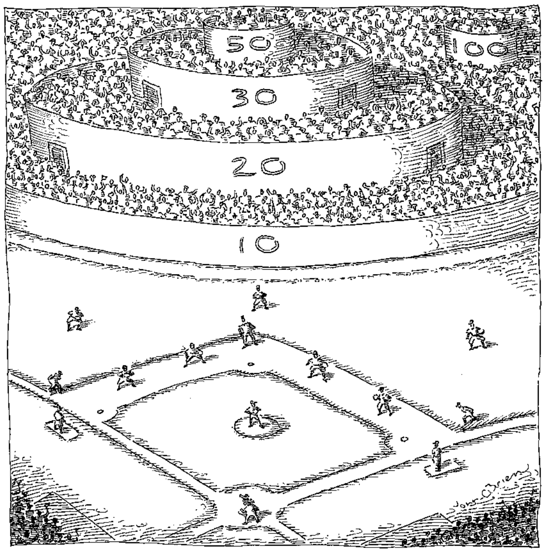
SUITS, [illegible] DERNAVICH, [illegible]/2009; CULLUM, 8/24/2009; O'BRIEN, 7/20/2009; KANIN, 2/23/2009

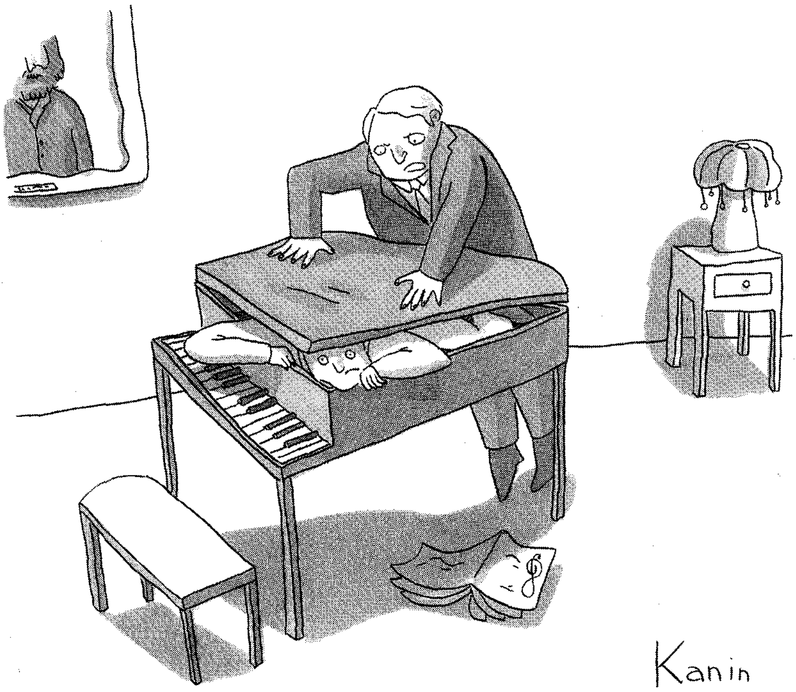


"Actually, it's pronounced 'An-hel.'"

3)
A. "An-hel" is the Spanish pronunciation of the word "angel"—a reference to the increasing number of Spanish-speaking residents of the United States of America.
B. If you don't get this joke, you must not be going to Heaven.
C. There are no atheists in foxholes, but evidently there are Spanish speakers.
D. It is actually pronounced "Angelo."

4)
A. This cartoon tries to provide a rational explanation for increased scoring in baseball.
B. Professional Skee-Ball players have become so jacked up on steroids that they might as well join Major League Baseball.
C. Sometimes it's jarring to the mind to see one thing juxtaposed with a slightly different thing. This is how comedy is made.
D. From God's perspective, we are all nothing more than worthless tickets in a giant Skee-Ball machine.



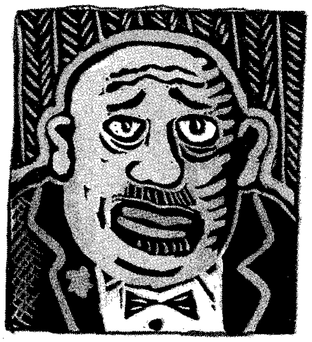


"If you have a better idea for making a talking piano, I'm all ears."

5)
A. After elephant ivory was banned, piano-makers resorted to using human bone.
B. Building a talking piano has baffled inventors since the Renaissance.
C. Before the advent of digital keyboards, this is how pianos were made.
D. "I'm all ears" is a play on the fact that pianos make sound. The man inside is more of a bystander to this joke.

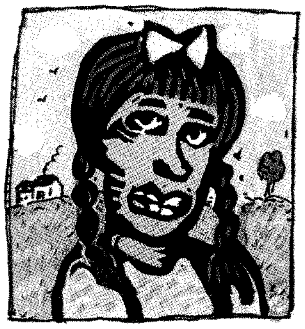
Answers: (1)D, (2)C, (3)A, (4)C, (5)B

INTRODUCING CRANKSTER-



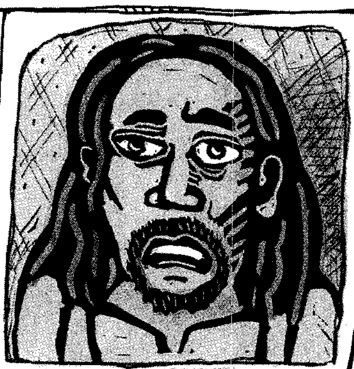
MEL

Once talked to someone else. It didn't work out.



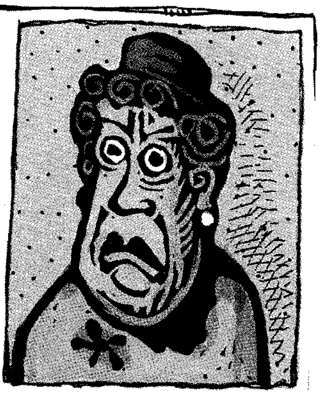
WENDY

Doesn't care what you're doing now or ever, so please keep it "under your hat."



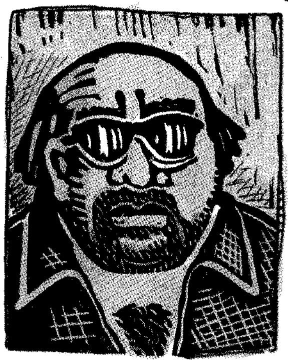
LUKE

Interests: isolation tanks, solitaire, single-serving portions.



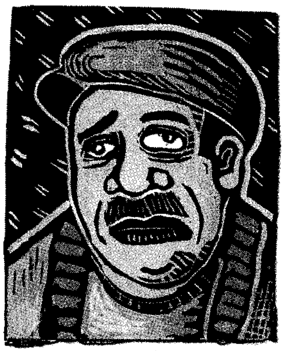
JOYCE

Your mere existence sets her teeth on edge.



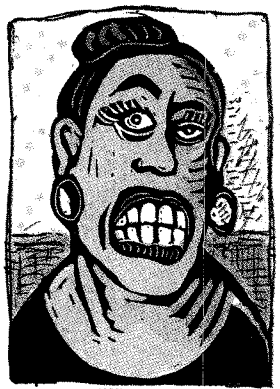
ANTOINE

Doesn't like it when people glance in his direction. So don't.



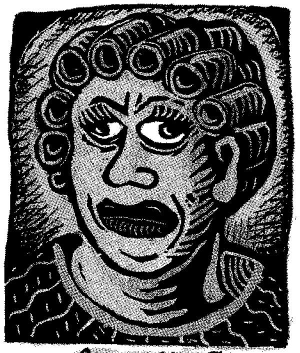
LOU

Don't shake his tree, whether or not you want his peaches.



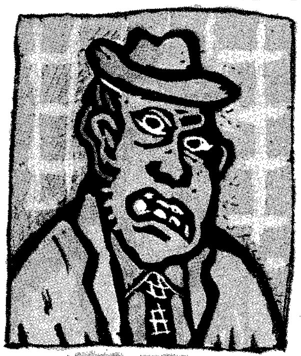
STELLA

That's her name. Don't wear it out.



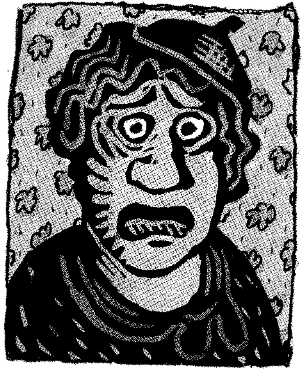
BERNICE

Collects bottle caps, bottle openers, old bottles, hot-water bottles, bottle magazines, bottle memorabilia, and much, much more.



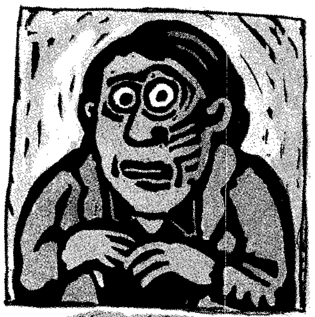
HARRIS

One's company. Two's a crowd.



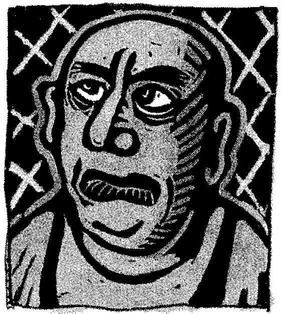
TIPPI

The fact is, sometimes you just... oh, never mind.



FLOYD

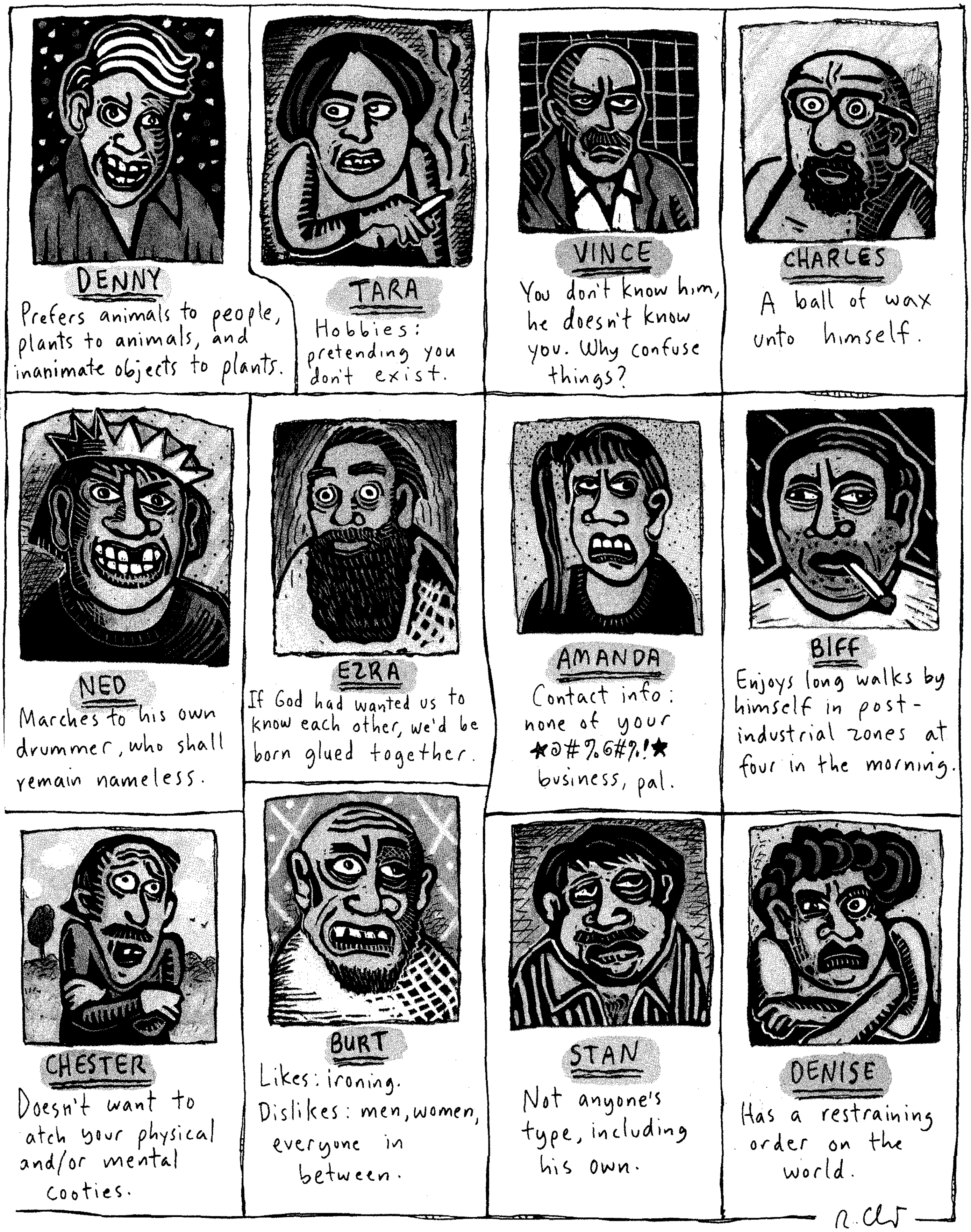
Likes the idea of people in the abstract.

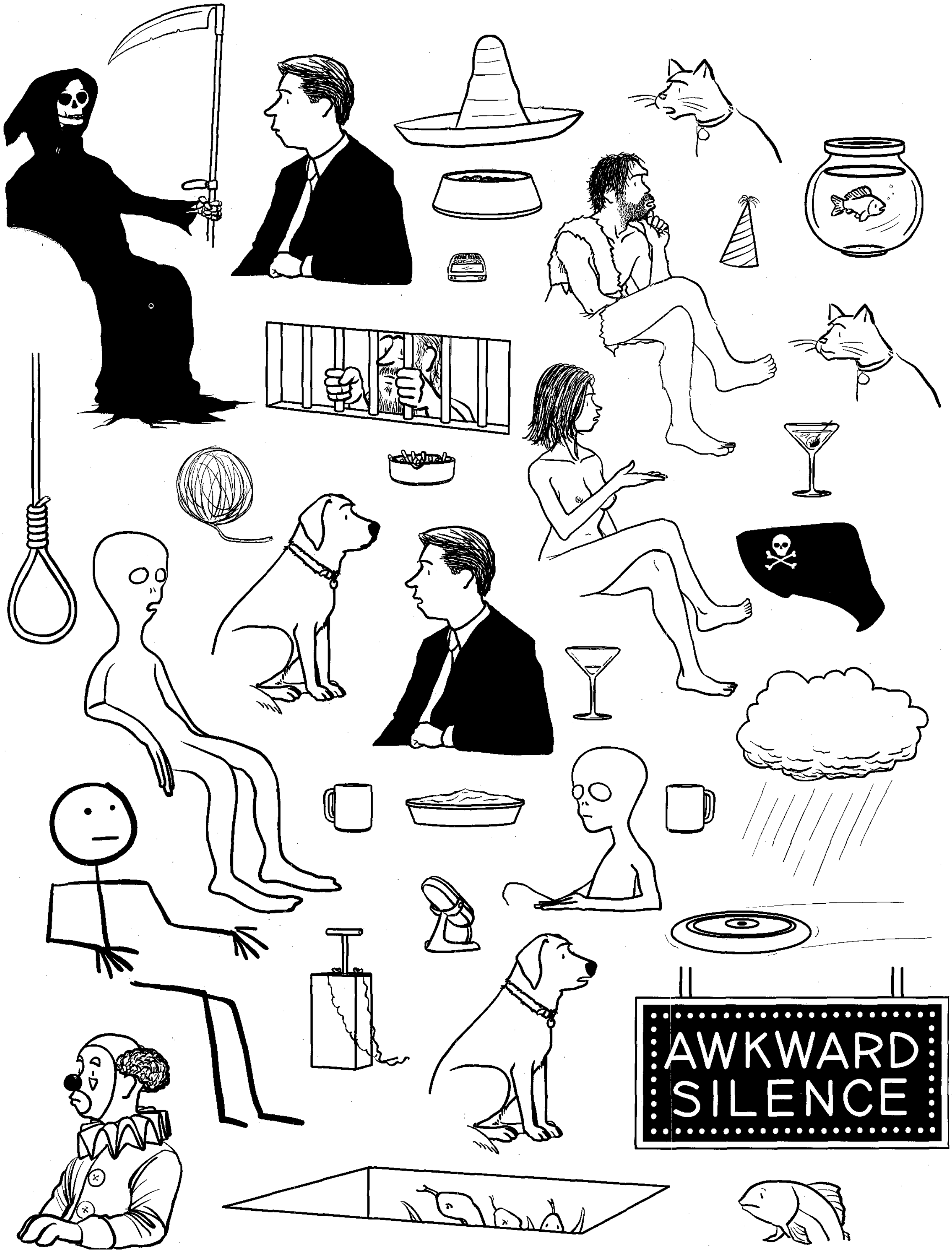


CAL

Personal space = 300 miles in every direction.

THE SITE FOR ANTI-SOCIAL NETWORKING

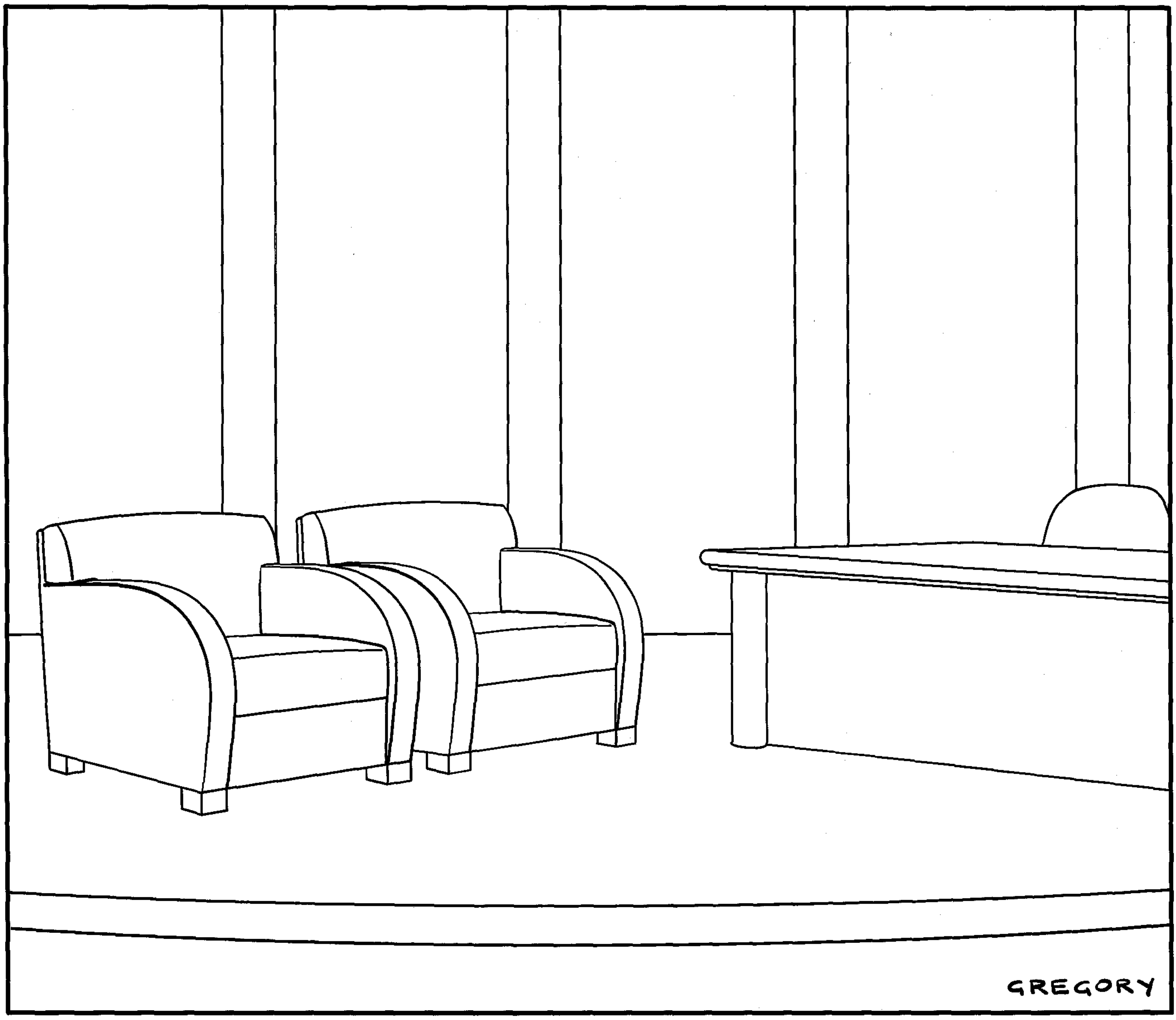

DENNY
Prefers animals to people, plants to animals, and inanimate objects to plants.
TARA
Hobbies: pretending you don't exist.
VINCE
You don't know him, he doesn't know you. Why confuse things?
CHARLES
A ball of wax unto himself.
NED
Marches to his own drummer, who shall remain nameless.
EZRA
If God had wanted us to know each other, we'd be born glued together.
AMANDA
Contact info: none of your ★@#%&#%!★ business, pal.
BIFF
Enjoys long walks by himself in post-industrial zones at four in the morning.
CHESTER
Doesn't want to atch your physical and/or mental cooties.
BURT
Likes: ironing.
Dislikes: men, women, everyone in between.
STAN
Not anyone's type, including his own.
DENISE
Has a restraining order on the world.


AWKWARD
SILENCE

CARTOON KIT CONTEST

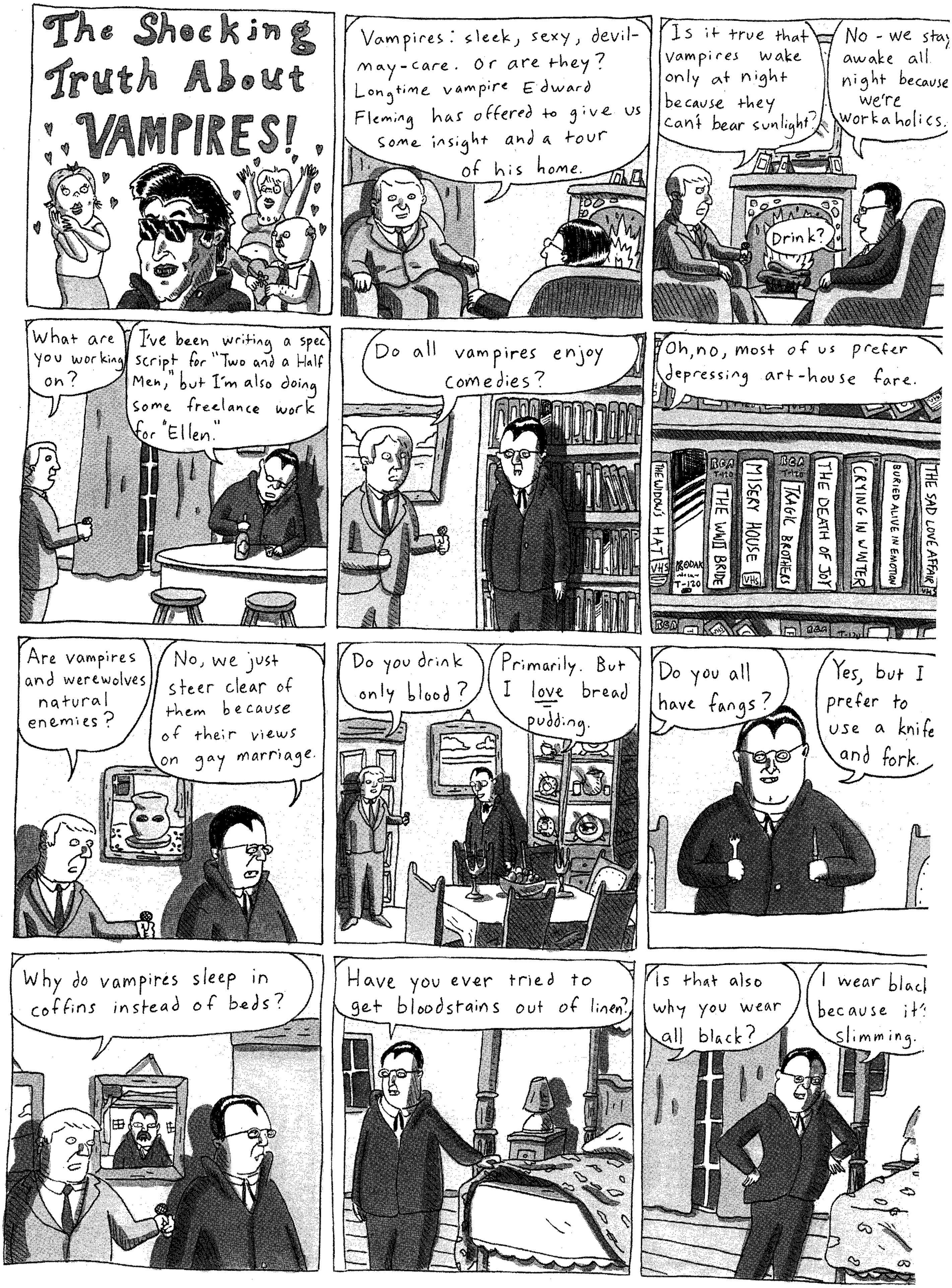
TALK SHOW

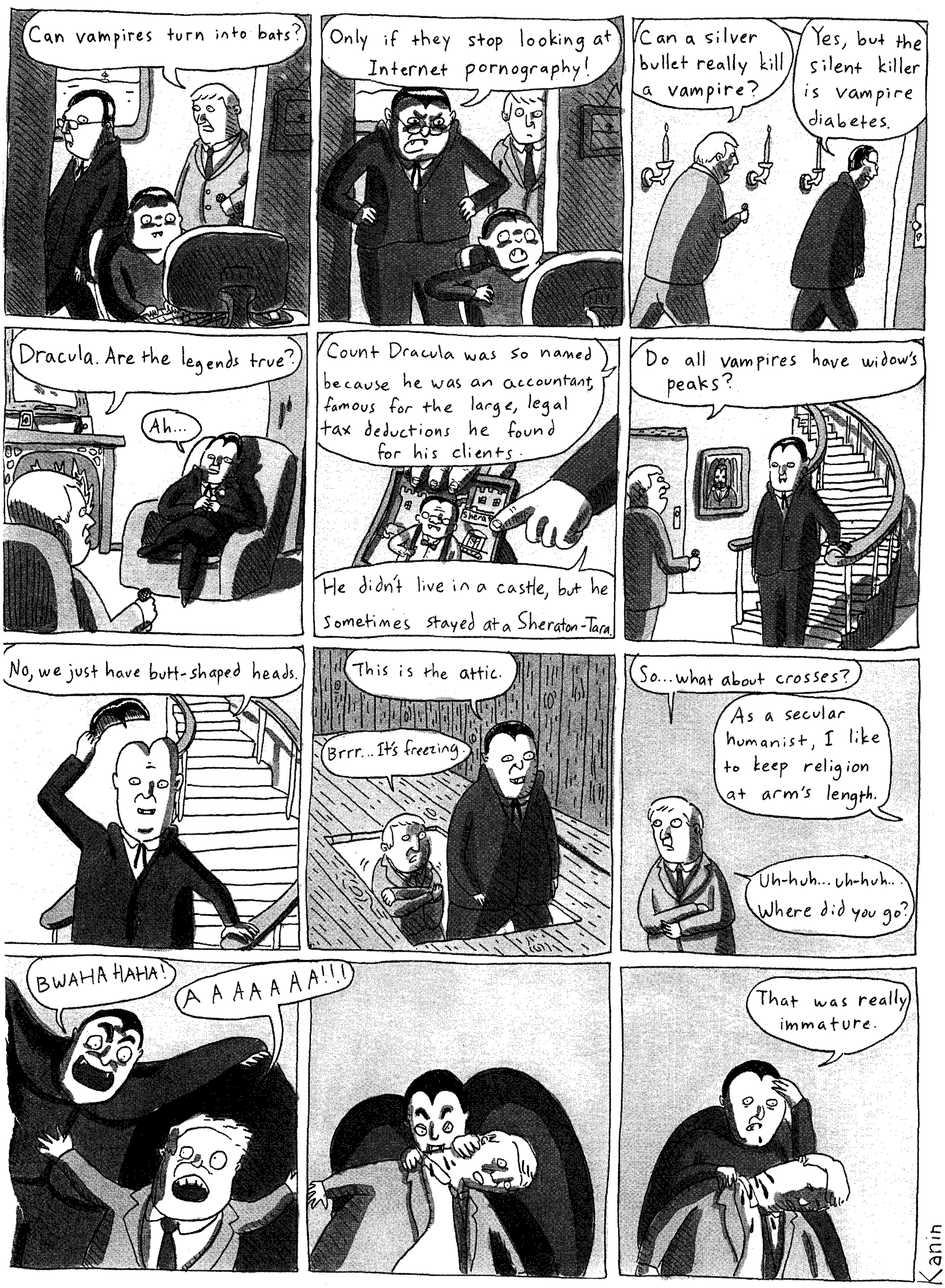
No, the cartoonist below didn't get lazy. Instead, we want you, the reader, to make the cartoon yourself, as part of our new feature, the Cartoon Kit Contest. Each month, we'll post a new contest online. Using the backdrop, characters, and props provided, submit your own cartoon, with a caption, and we'll select five winners, to be featured online. Submissions for this month's contest, "Talk Show," by Alex Gregory, will be accepted from October 26th through November 22nd. For more details, see below.



"   "

Submissions for "Talk Show," by Alex Gregory, will be accepted from 12:01 A.M. E.T. October 26th through 11:59 P.M. E.T. November 22nd. We will be giving away a copy of our new book, "On the Money: The Economy in Cartoons, 1925-2009" (valued at $24.99), every day from October 26th through November 22nd. Anyone who registers for the Cartoon Kit Contest, invites a friend to register, or votes on an entry between 12:01 A.M. E.T. October 26th and 11:59 P.M. E.T. November 22nd is eligible. The grand prize, chosen at random from all entries, is a trip for two to New York City (approximate retail value: $3,000) to meet Robert Mankoff, the cartoon editor, and tour the *New Yorker* offices. Any legal resident of the U.S. or Canada (except Quebec) age thirteen or over can enter. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/go/cartoonkit. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Odds of winning random drawings depend on the number of entries received. Sponsored by Condé Nast Publications. Void where prohibited.

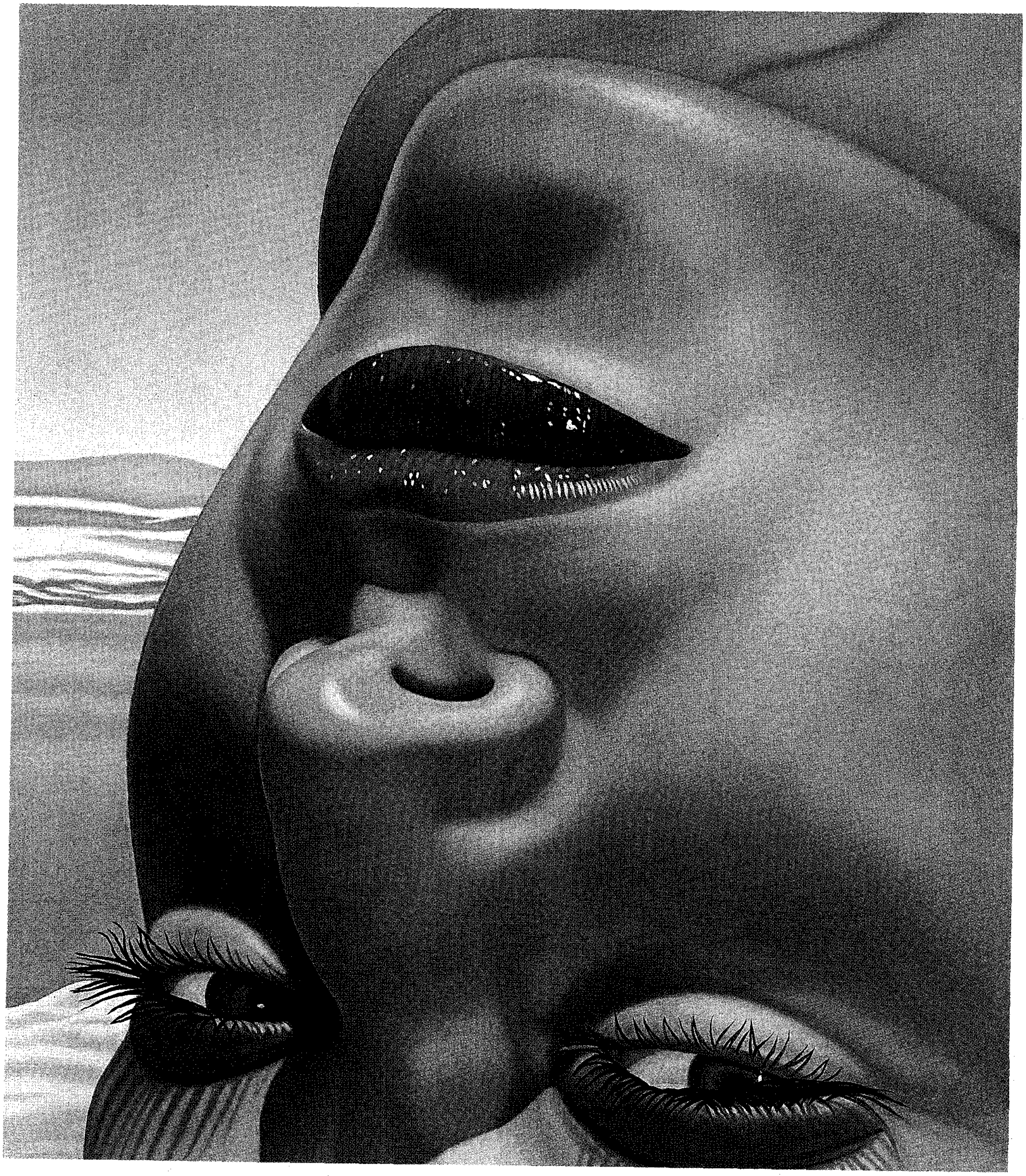

The Shocking Truth About VAMPIRES!
Vampires: sleek, sexy, devil-may-care. Or are they? Longtime vampire Edward Fleming has offered to give us some insight and a tour of his home.
Is it true that vampires wake only at night because they can't bear sunlight?
No - we stay awake all night because we're workaholics.
Drink?
What are you working on?
I've been writing a spec script for "Two and a Half Men," but I'm also doing some freelance work for "Ellen."
Do all vampires enjoy comedies?
Oh, no, most of us prefer depressing art-house fare.
THE WIDOW'S HAT
THE WAN BRIDE
MISERY HOUSE
TRAGIC BROTHERS
THE DEATH OF JOY
CRYING IN WINTER
BURIED ALIVE IN EMOTION
THE SAD LOVE AFFAIR
Are vampires and werewolves natural enemies?
No, we just steer clear of them because of their views on gay marriage.
Do you drink only blood?
Primarily. But I love bread pudding.
Do you all have fangs?
Yes, but I prefer to use a knife and fork.
Why do vampires sleep in coffins instead of beds?
Have you ever tried to get bloodstains out of linen?
Is that also why you wear all black?
I wear black because it' slimming.


Can vampires turn into bats?
Only if they stop looking at Internet pornography!
Can a silver bullet really kill a vampire?
Yes, but the silent killer is vampire diabetes.
Dracula. Are the legends true?
Ah...
Count Dracula was so named because he was an accountant, famous for the large, legal tax deductions he found for his clients.
Shera
He didn't live in a castle, but he sometimes stayed at a Sheraton-Tara.
Do all vampires have widow's peaks?
No, we just have butt-shaped heads.
This is the attic.
Brrr... It's freezing.
So... what about crosses?
As a secular humanist, I like to keep religion at arm's length.
Uh-huh... uh-huh... Where did you go?
BWAHAHAHA!
A A A A A A A!!!
That was really immature.
Kanin

FICTION

WHILE THE WOMEN ARE SLEEPING

BY JAVIER MARÍAS



For three weeks, I saw them every day, and now I don't know what has become of them. I'll probably never see them again—at least, not her. Summer conversations, and even confidences, rarely lead anywhere.

I nearly always saw them at the beach, where it's difficult to get a good look at people. Especially so for me, because I'm nearsighted and would rather see everything through a haze than return to Madrid with a kind of white mask on my otherwise perfectly tanned face, and I never wear my contact lenses when I go to the beach or into the sea, where they might be lost forever. Nevertheless, I was tempted to rummage around in the bag in which my wife, Luisa, keeps my glasses case—well, the temptation came from her, really, because she, if I may put it this way, was constantly transmitting to me the more peculiar activities of the more peculiar bathers around us.

"Yes, I can see him, but only vaguely. I can't make out his actual features," I'd say when she pointed out some character she found particularly amusing. I'd squint in that direction, reluctant to get my glasses out only to have to return them to their hiding place once my curiosity was satisfied. Then one day Luisa, who knows the strangest and most insignificant things and is always surprising me with scraps of useful knowledge, passed me her straw hat and advised me to look through the gaps. And I discovered that by peering through the hat I could see almost as well as if I were wearing contact lenses—better, in fact, although my field of vision was greatly reduced. From that point on, I myself must have seemed like one of the more eccentric beachgoers, since I often had a woman's straw hat, complete with ribbons, clamped to my face while I scanned the length and breadth of the beach near Fornells, where we were staying. Luisa, without a word of complaint or a flicker of annoyance, bought another hat, which she didn't like as much, to shade her face—her fine-featured, open, and as yet unlined face.

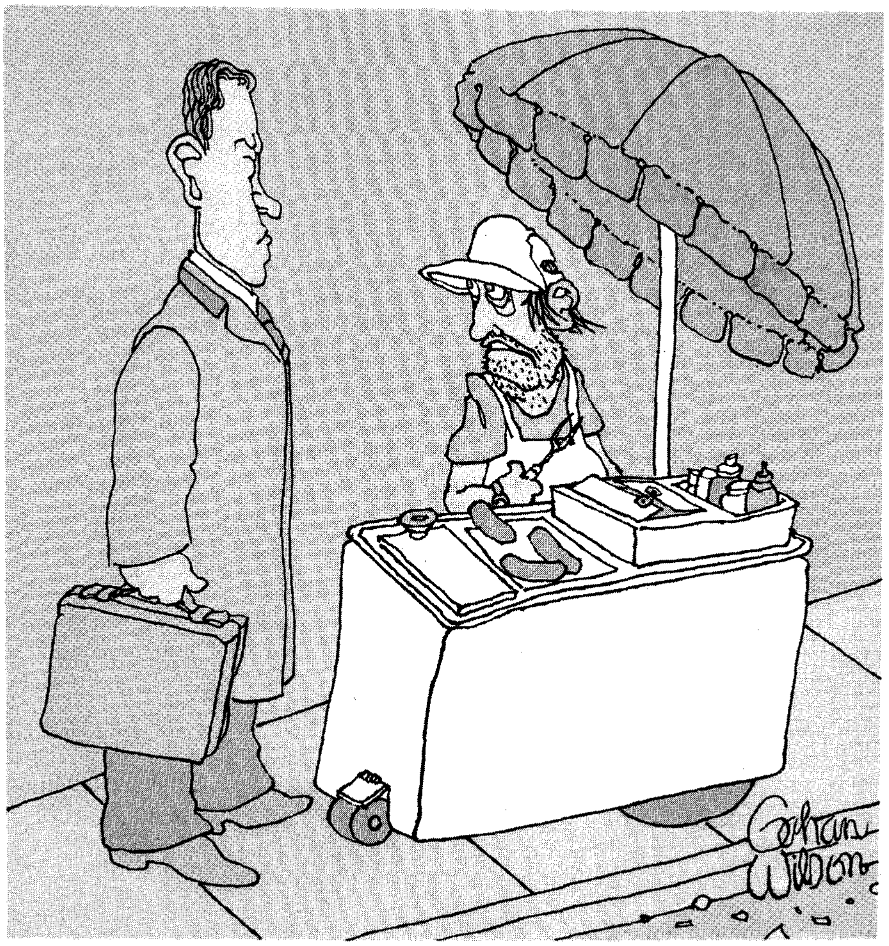
One afternoon, we entertained ourselves with the exploits of a small Italian sailor—that is, an insubordinate one-year-old wearing nothing but a sailor's hat, who, as we kept reporting to each other, was going around destroying not only the fortifications built in the sand by his siblings and older cousins but doubtless also some of his progenitors' long-term friendships, and doing so with the same aplomb with which he drank the salt water (he seemed to swallow gallons of the stuff), to the complete indifference of the adults accompanying him. His sailor's hat kept falling off, leaving him completely naked, lying on the shore like a spurned cupid. Another day, we followed the despotic comments and idle comings and goings of a middle-aged Englishman—the island was heaving with English people—who kept up a kind of running commentary on the temperature, the sand, the wind, and the waves, speaking as emphatically and grandiloquently as if he were uttering a series of deep, long-pondered aphorisms. He had the virtue, one that is becoming increasingly rare, of believing that *everything* was important, or, rather, that everything that came from him was unique. He never swam, and when he did wade into the sea, never very far, he did so only in pursuit of one of his offspring so as to photograph him or her. With his stomach—but not his chest—wet from the waves, he would return to the shore, muttering further unforgettable pronouncements, which the wind promptly scattered, and pressing his camera to his ear, as if it were a radio, concerned, apparently, that it might have got splashed, a primitive way, I suppose, of checking that it had come to no harm.

Then one day we saw them. I mean, they came to our attention—well, to Luisa's first and then to mine, through my seeing hat. From then on, they became our favorites, and each morning, without realizing that we were doing so, we'd look for them before choosing a spot. On one occasion, we arrived at the beach before them, but shortly afterward we saw them roar up on a gigantic Harley-Davidson, with him at the handlebars wearing a black helmet, the straps hanging loose, and her clinging to him, her long hair streaming behind her. I think what drove us to seek them out was the fact that they offered us a rare sight, the kind it's always hard to look away from: the spectacle of one human being adoring another. In accordance with the old and still valid rule, it was he, the man, who did the adoring, and she, the woman, who was the appropriately indifferent idol. She was beautiful, indolent, passive, and, by nature, languid. Throughout the three hours a day that we spent at the beach (they stayed longer, perhaps taking their siesta there and, who knows, staying until sunset), she barely moved and was, of course, concerned only with her own beautification. She dozed or was, at any rate, usually lying down, eyes closed, on her front, on her back, on one side, on the other, covered in sunscreen, her gleaming arms and legs always fully extended so that no part of her would remain untanned, no fold in her skin, not even her armpits or her groin (or, it goes without saying, her buttocks), because her bikini bottom was minuscule and revealed an area entirely free of hair. Now and then she would raise herself into a sitting position and then spend a long time with her knees drawn up while she painted her nails or, with a small hand mirror, scrutinized herself for blemishes or unwanted hair. It was odd to see her holding the mirror to the most unlikely parts of her body (it must have been a magnifying mirror), not just to her head and shoulders, I mean, but to her elbows, her calves, her hips, her breasts, the insides of her thighs, even her navel. In addition to her tiny bikini, she wore bracelets and various rings, never fewer than eight of the latter covering her fingers. I rarely saw her go into the water. It would be easy to say that she was a conventional beauty, but that would be a poor description—too broad and too vague. Rather, her beauty was unreal, which is to say ideal. It was what children think of as beauty, which is almost always (unless the children are already deviants) an immaculate beauty, unmarked, in repose, docile, gestureless, with very white skin and large breasts, round—or at least not almond-shaped—eyes, and with identical lips, that is, upper and lower lip identical, as if they were both lower lips: the kind of beauty you get in cartoons or in advertisements, and not in just any advertisements but in those you see in pharmacies, deliberately devoid of any hint of sensuality.

Her male companion was what you might call fat, or even obese, and he must have been more than thirty years older than her. Like many bald men, he believed that he could make up for his lack by wearing what hair he had brushed forward, Roman style—which never works—and by cultivating an abundant

DETAIL: RICHARD PHILLIPS, "DER BODENSEE" (2008)/GAGOSIAN GALLERY, NY

mustache. He also believed that he could disguise his age, in this particular setting, by wearing a two-tone swimsuit—with the right leg lime green, the left leg purple. The suit was as small as his bulbous body allowed—it was inaccurate to speak of it as having legs, really—and this meant that his movements were always slightly constrained by the ever-present threat of the suit's ripping. For he was in constant, agile motion, video camera in hand. Whereas his companion remained completely immobile for hours on end, he never ceased circling her, tirelessly filming her. He would stand on tiptoe, bend double, lie on the ground, on his back or his stomach, take pan shots, medium shots, closeups, tracking shots, and panoramic shots, from above and from below, full face, from the side, from behind. He filmed her inert face, her softly rounded shoulders, her voluminous breasts, her rather wide hips, her firm thighs, her far from tiny feet, her carefully painted toenails, her soles, her calves, her hairless groin and armpits. He filmed the beads of sweat provoked by the sun, probably even her pores—although that smooth, uniform skin seemed to have no pores, no folds or bumps, and not a single stretch mark marred her buttocks. The fat man filmed her every day for hours at a time, with few breaks, always recording the same scene: the stillness and tedium of the unreal beauty who accompanied him. He wasn't interested in the sand or the water, which changed color as the day wore on, or the trees or the rocks in the distance, or a kite flying or a boat far off, or other women, the little Italian sailor, the despotic Englishman, or Luisa. He didn't ask the young woman to do anything—to play games, to make an effort, or to pose. He seemed content with making a visual record, day after day, of that naked, statuary figure, of that slow, docile flesh, of that inexpressive face and those closed or, perhaps, fastidious eyes, of a knee bending or a breast tilting or a forefinger slowly removing a speck from a cheek. Where Luisa or I or anyone else saw only repetition and tedium, he must, at every moment, have seen a remarkable spectacle, as multiform, varied, and absorbing as a painting can be when the viewer forgets about the other paintings waiting for him and loses all notion of time, and loses, too, therefore, the habit of looking, which is replaced or supplanted—or, perhaps, excluded—by the capacity to *see*, which is what we almost never do, because it's so at odds with the purely temporal.



"You couldn't handle my hot dogs!"

They spoke little and only occasionally, in short sentences that never became conversation or dialogue, any hint of which died a natural death, interrupted by the attention that the woman was giving to her body, in which she was utterly absorbed, and by the indirect attention that the man, too, was giving to her body, through his camera lens. In fact, I don't recall his ever stopping to look at her directly, with his own eyes, with nothing between his eyes and her. In that respect, he was like me, for I, in turn, viewed them either through the veil of my myopia or through my magnifying hat. Of the four of us, only Luisa could see everything without difficulty or mediation. I don't think the woman saw or even looked at anyone; she used her mirror only to scrutinize and inspect, and often put on a pair of extravagant space-age sunglasses.

"The sun's hot today, isn't it? You should put on more sunscreen—you don't want to burn," the fat man would say, pausing in his circular tours of his adored one's body, and when he didn't receive an immediate answer he'd say her name, the way mothers say their children's names: "Inés. Inés."

"Yes, it's definitely hotter than yesterday, but I've put on some S.P.F. ten," Inés replied, reluctantly and barely audibly, while, with a pair of tweezers, she plucked a tiny hair from her chin.

And there the conversation would end.

One day, Luisa—because she and I did have conversations—said, "To be honest, I don't know whether I'd enjoy being filmed like poor Inés. It would make me nervous, although I suppose I'd get used to it in the end if someone was doing it all the time, like the fat man. And then perhaps I'd take as much care of myself as she does, although she probably takes so much care only because she's constantly being filmed and knows she'll see herself later on film—or perhaps just for posterity." Luisa rummaged around in her bag, took out a small mirror, and studied her eyes, which, in the sun, were the color of plums, with iridescent flecks in them. "Then again what kind of posterity would want to waste its time watching those tedious videos? Do you think he films her the rest of the day, too?"

"Probably," I said. "Why limit himself to the beach? I doubt he needs it as an excuse to see her naked."

"I don't think he films her just because she's naked. I bet he does it all the time, perhaps even when she's sleeping. It's touching, really. He obviously thinks only of her. Poor Inés. Not that she seems to mind."

That night, after we got into our double bed at the hotel, both at once, each on our own side, I lay thinking about the things we'd said, which I've just set down in writing, and, unable to sleep, I spent a long time watching Luisa sleeping, in the dark, with only the moon to light her. "Poor Inés," she had said. Her breathing was very soft, but still audible in the silence of the room, the hotel, and the island. Her body was immobile, apart from her eyelids, beneath which her eyes were doubtless moving about, as though they couldn't get used to not doing at night what they did during the day. Perhaps the fat man is awake, too, I thought, filming the beautiful Inés's perfectly still eyelids, or maybe he is pulling the sheets off her and very carefully arranging her body in different positions to film in her sleep. With her nightgown pushed up, perhaps, or with her legs apart, if she isn't wearing a nightgown or pajamas. Luisa didn't wear a nightgown or pajamas in the summer, but she did wrap the sheet around her like a toga, clasping it to her with both hands, though a shoulder or the nape of her neck would sometimes come uncovered, and then, if I noticed it, I would cover her up again.

I got up and went over to the balcony to kill time until sleep came, and from there, leaning on the balustrade, I looked up at the sky and then down, and that was when I thought I saw the fat man sitting alone by the swimming pool, in the dark, the water reflecting the stars. I didn't recognize him at first, because he didn't have his mustache. His clothes were as ugly and incongruous as his two-tone swimsuit—a baggy shirt, which looked black from my balcony but was probably patterned, and a pair of light-colored slacks that appeared to be a very pale blue, though that was possibly a reflection from the nearly invisible water. On his feet he wore a pair of red moccasins, and his socks (imagine wearing socks on the island) seemed to be the same color as his trousers, but, again, that might have been the effect of the moonlight on the water. He was resting his head on one hand and the corresponding elbow on the arm of a floral-patterned lounge chair. He didn't have his camera with him. I hadn't realized that they were staying at the same hotel as us, since we had only ever seen them at the beach, to the north of Fornells, in the mornings. He was alone, as motionless as Inés on the beach, although now and then he switched from that drowsy, relaxed pose of head and elbow to another, apparently contrary position, his face buried in his hands, his feet tucked under him, as if he were exhausted or tense or possibly laughing to himself. At one point, he took off a shoe or accidentally dropped it, but he didn't immediately reach out his foot to recover it—he just stayed like that, his stockinged foot on the grass, which gave him a helpless look, at least from my fourth-floor perspective.

I got dressed in the dark, taking care not to make any noise, and checked that Luisa was well wrapped in her sheet-cum-toga. She hadn't woken up when I got out of bed but had somehow sensed my absence in her sleep, for she was lying diagonally now, her legs invading my space. I went down in the elevator, not having checked the time, past the night porter, who was sleeping uncomfortably, his head on the counter, like a future decapitee; I had left my watch upstairs, and everything lay in silence, apart from the slight noise made by my black moccasins. (*I* wasn't wearing socks.) I slid open the glass door that led to the swimming pool and, once I was outside on the grass, closed it again. The fat man raised his head, glanced over at the door, and immediately noticed my presence, although he couldn't identify me in the dim light.

"You've shaved off your mustache," I said, running my index finger over my upper lip. I was not quite sure that I should be making such a comment. Before he

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MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER'S BIBLE

Faux-leather bound and thick as an onion, it flakes—
an heirloom from Iowa my dead often read.
I open the black flap to speak the "spake"s
and quickly lose track of who wed, who bred.
She taped our family register as it tore,
her hand stuttering like a sewing machine,
darning the blanks with farmers gone before—
Inez, Alvah, Delbert, Ermadean.
Our undistinguished line she pressed in the heft
between the Testaments, with spaces to spare,
smudged with mistakes or tears; her fingers left
a mounting watchfulness I find hard to bear.
When I saw the AIDS quilt, spread out in acres,
it was stitched with similar scripts by similar makers.

—*Spencer Reece*

could reply, I had reached his side and sat down on a lounge chair next to him, a striped one. I think that this was the first time I had seen his face without a camera to his eye or a hat to mine. He had an affable face, alert eyes, and his features weren't ugly, simply fat. He struck me as one of those handsome bald men, like the actor Michel Piccoli or the pianist Richter. He looked younger without his mustache, or perhaps it was the red moccasins, one of which still lay upturned on the grass. He must have been at least fifty.

"Oh, it's you. I didn't recognize you at first with your clothes on. We usually only see each other in our swimming gear. Can't you sleep?"

"No," I said. "The air-conditioning in the room doesn't always help. You're better off out here, I think. Do you mind if I join you for a while?"

"No, of course not. My name's Alberto Viana," and he shook my hand. "I'm from Barcelona."

"I'm from Madrid," I said and told him my name. Then there was a silence, and I wondered whether I should make some trivial remark about the island or about holidays or some other almost equally trivial remark about the activities we had observed on the beach. It was my curiosity about those activities that had led me to his side by the pool—well, that and my insomnia, although I could have continued to struggle with it upstairs or even woken Luisa, but I hadn't. I was speaking almost in a whisper. It was unlikely that anyone could hear us, but the sight of Luisa and of the night porter sound asleep had given me the feeling that if I raised my voice I would disturb their slumber, and my hushed tones immediately infected or influenced the way Viana spoke.

"I've noticed that you're very keen on video cameras," I said after that pause, that hesitation.

"Video cameras?" he said, slightly surprised or as if to gain time. "Ah, I see. No, not really, I'm not a collector. It isn't the camera itself that interests me, although I do use it a lot. It's my girlfriend, whom you've seen, I'm sure. I film only her, nothing else. I don't experiment with it at all. That's fairly obvious, I suppose." And he gave a short laugh, half amused, half embarrassed.

"Yes, of course, my wife and I have both noticed. I think she feels slightly envious of the attention you lavish on your girlfriend. It's very unusual. I don't even have a regular camera. But then we've been married for some time."

"You don't have a camera? Don't you like to be able to remember things?" Viana asked me this with genuine confusion. As I had suspected, his shirt did have a pattern, a multicolored blend of palm trees and anchors and dolphins and ships' prows, but nevertheless the predominant color was the black I had seen from above. His trousers and socks still appeared to be pale blue.

"Yes, of course I do, but you can remember things in other ways, don't you think? Memory is a kind of camera, except that we don't always remember what we want to remember or forget what we want to forget."

"What nonsense," Viana said. He was a frank fellow, not at all the reserved type, and he could say what he had said without causing offense. He gave another short laugh. "How can you compare what you can remember with what you can *see*, with what you can see again, just as it happened? With what you can watch over and over, ad infinitum, and even freeze? What nonsense," he repeated.

"Yes, you're right," I agreed. "But you're not telling me that you film your girlfriend all the time so that you can remember her later? Is she perhaps an actress? Though she wouldn't have time, would she, given that you appear to film her every day. And if you film her every day there isn't time for what you've shot even to begin to be forgotten or for you to feel the need to recall her in that faithful manner by watching her again on film. Unless you're keeping the films for when you're both old and want to relive your stay here in Minorca hour by hour."

"Oh, I don't keep them all, no, only a few brief fragments, maybe one tape every three or four months. And, no, she isn't an actress. What I do here, and at home, too, is wait a day before I erase the previous day's tape, if you see what I mean. All this time, I've used only two tapes, always the same ones. I use one today, then use another one tomorrow, and then, the day after, I tape over the first one and erase it that way. I won't have time to tape much tomorrow, because we're going back to Barcelona. My holiday's over."

"I see. But then, once you're home, what will you do? Make a montage of everything you've filmed?"

"No, you don't see. Artistic videos are one thing, made in order to be filed away. They get put aside, one cassette every four months or so. The daily tapings are a separate matter. Those get erased every other day."

It may have been the lateness of the hour, but I still didn't entirely understand, especially the second part of his explanation. And I wasn't that interested in the direction the conversation had taken—about artistic videos (that's what he said) and erased tapes, the day-to-day ones. I considered saying good night and going back up to my room, but I wasn't sleepy, and I thought that if I did go back I would probably end up waking Luisa just so that she would talk to me.

"But," I said, "why do you film her every day if you erase it afterward?"

"I film her because she's going to die," Viana said. He had stretched out his stockinged foot and dipped his big toe into the water, moving it slowly back and forth, his leg fully extended, for he could only just reach far enough to touch the surface. I fell silent for a few seconds, and then, as I watched him stirring the water, I asked, "Is she ill?"

Viana pursed his lips and ran his hand over his bald head, as if he still had hair and was smoothing it, a gesture from the past. He was thinking. Finally, he spoke again, to answer not my last question but the previous one.

"I film her every day because she's going to die, and I want to have a record of her last day, of what might be her last day, so that I can really remember it, so that when she's dead I can see it again as often as I wish, along with the artistic videos. Because I *do* like to remember things."

"But is she ill?" I asked again.

"No, she's not ill," he said, this time without pausing to think. "At least as far as I know. But she'll die one day. You know that. Everyone knows that. Everyone is going to die, and I want to preserve her image. The last day in anyone's life is important."

"Of course," I said, looking at his foot. "You're being cautious. She might have an accident, for example." And I thought (but only briefly) that if Luisa were to die in an accident I wouldn't have many pictures to remember her by, hardly any images at all. I certainly didn't have any videos of her. Without thinking, I glanced up at the balcony from which I had observed Viana. There were no lights on anywhere.

Viana was again immersed in thought, although now he had removed his foot from the water and placed it again—with the tip of the sock wet and dark—on the grass. I began to think that he didn't like the direction the conversation had taken, and again I considered saying good night and going up to my room. Yes, I suddenly wanted to go up to my room and see Luisa, asleep—not

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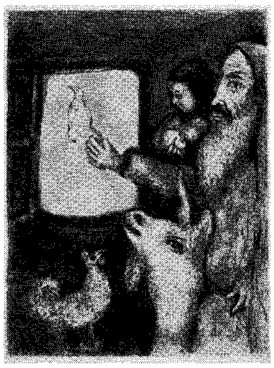

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dead—wrapped in her sheet, with one shoulder perhaps uncovered. But conversations, once begun, can't be abandoned just like that. Viana was saying something, not in a whisper now, but as if muttering to himself.

"I'm sorry, what did you say?" I asked.

"No, I'm not thinking that she might have an accident," he replied, his voice suddenly too loud, as if he had miscalculated the shift in tone between talking to himself and talking to someone else.

"Lower your voice," I said, alarmed, although there was no reason to feel alarmed; it was unlikely that anyone would hear us. I glanced again at the balconies, but they all still lay in darkness. No one had woken up.

Viana was startled by my order and immediately lowered his voice, but he wasn't startled enough not to continue what he had begun to say.

"I said that I'm not thinking she might have an accident. But she'll definitely die before me, if you see what I mean."

"Why are you so sure of that if she isn't ill? You're much older. The normal thing would be for you to die before her."

Viana laughed again and, stretching his leg out farther, dipped his whole stockinged foot into the water and began to move it slowly, heavily around, more heavily than before because now his whole foot—that wide, obese foot—was submerged.

"Normal," he said, laughing. "Normal," he repeated. "Nothing is normal between her and me. Or, rather, nothing is normal as regards my relationship with her, and never has been. I've known her since she was a child. Don't you see? I adore her."

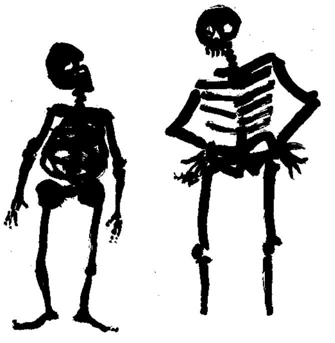
"Yes, I see that. It's obvious that you adore her. I adore my wife, Luisa, as well," I added, in order to counter what he clearly considered to be the extraordinary nature of his adoration of Inés. "But we are more or less the same age, so who knows which of us will die first?"

"You adore her? Don't make me laugh. You don't even own a camera. You have no interest in remembering her exactly as she was, were you to lose her, or in seeing her again when it will no longer be possible to see her."

This time, fat Viana's remark did bother me a little; I found it impertinent. I noticed this because I felt that there was something wounded and involuntary about my ensuing silence, something fearful, too, as if I suddenly no longer dared ask him anything and had no option but to listen to whatever he chose to tell me. It was as if that abrupt, indelicate remark had entirely taken over the conversation. And I realized that my fear came also from his use of the past tense. He had said "exactly as she was" when referring to Luisa, when he should have said "exactly as she is." I decided to leave him and go back up to my room. I was feeling rather angry. However, after a few seconds Viana continued talking, and by then it was too late not to continue to listen.

"What you say is very true, but it hardly takes a genius to work that out," he said. "It's actually quite difficult to know who will die first. To know that, you have to be a part of it, if you know what I mean. Not to disrupt the order of our dying—that would be impossible—but to be a part of it. Listen, when I said that I adore Inés, I meant it literally: I adore her. It's not just a turn of phrase, a meaningless, garden-variety expression that you and I can share, for example. What you call 'adoring' has nothing whatever to do with what I call 'adoring.' We share the word because there is no other, but we don't share its meaning. I adore her and have adored her ever since I first met her, and I know that I'll continue to adore her for many years to come. That's why it can't last much longer—because that feeling has been the same inside me for too many years now, unvarying. Soon, it will become unbearable—it already is. And because, one day, it will all become unbearable to me, she will have to die before me, when I can no longer stand my adoration of her. One day, I'll have to kill her, do you see?"

Having said that, Viana lifted his dripping foot out of the water and rested



it and its sodden silk sock carefully and distastefully on the grass.

"You'll catch cold," I said. "You'd better take off your sock."

Viana did as I suggested and removed the drenched sock, mechanically, indifferently. For a few seconds, he held it, again distastefully, between two fingers, and then he draped it over the back of his chair, where it began to drip, with the smell of wet cloth. Now he had one bare foot and the other still covered by a pale-blue sock and a rabidly red moccasin. The bare foot was wet, and the covered foot very dry. I found it hard to look away from the former, but perhaps fixing my gaze on something was a way of deceiving my ears, of pretending that what mattered were Viana's feet and not what he had said: that one day he would have to kill Inés.

"What are you saying? Are you crazy?" I didn't want to continue the conversation, but I said precisely the words that obliged him to do so.

"Crazy? What I'm going to tell you now is, in my view, totally logical," Viana replied, and he again smoothed his nonexistent hair. "I've known Inés since she was a child, since she was seven years old. Now she's twenty-three. She's the daughter of a couple who were great friends of mine until five years ago, but who no longer are, because, as is perfectly normal, they're angry that their eighteen-year-old daughter went off to live with a friend of theirs, and they want nothing more to do with me or, almost, with her. I used to go to my friends' house often, and there I would see Inés, and I adored her. She adored me, too, but in a different way, of course. She couldn't know it at the time but I knew at once, and I decided to prepare myself, to wait the eleven years until she came of age. I didn't want to act in haste and ruin everything, and during the last few months I was the one who had to hold her back. It's what some people call 'fixation,' and I call 'adoration.' I worked out that by the time she was eighteen I would be nearly fifty, and so I took good care of myself, for her sake. I took enormous care of myself, although I couldn't do anything about my weight—your metabolism changes as you get older—or about my baldness. There's still no satisfactory remedy for that, and, as I'm sure you'll agree, a toupee is too undignified. But I spent eleven years going to gyms and eating healthily and having checkups every three months—I have an absolute horror of operations—avoiding other women, avoiding diseases, and, of course, preparing myself mentally: listening to the same records she listened to, learning games, watching TV, children's shows and years of ads. I know all the jingles by heart. As for reading matter, well, you can imagine. First I read comic books, then adventure books, a few romantic novels, the Spanish literature she was studying at school, as well as the Catalan, Manelic and the wolf, and all that. I still read whatever she happens to be reading, American writers, mainly—there are hundreds of them. I've played a lot of tennis and squash, done a bit of skiing, and, on weekends, I've often had to travel to Madrid or San Sebastián just so that she could go to the races, and here we've been to all the fiestas in all the villages to see the horses and their riders. You may also have noticed me riding a motorcycle. And you've seen how I dress, although, of course, in summer anything goes." Viana made an eloquent gesture with his right hand, as if taking in his whole outfit. "Do you see what I'm saying? All these years, I've led a parallel existence—I'm a lawyer, by the way, specializing in divorce. First a childhood existence, then an adolescent one—I was the king of video games—and, since I couldn't go to the movies with her, I'd go on my own to see all those teen movies about thugs and extraterrestrials. I've led a parallel existence, but one with no continuity, because it's incredibly hard to stay up to date—young people's interests change all the time. You said that you and your wife are about the same age, so your fields of reference must be very similar. It's easy for you. Just imagine if it weren't like that—imagine the long silences there would be in your conversations. And the worst thing would be having to explain everything, every reference, every allusion, every joke about your own past or your own era. Best not to bother. I had a long wait, and, what's more, I had to reject my own past and create, as much as possible, another one that coincided with hers, with what would become her past."

Viana paused for a moment, very briefly. Our eyes were accustomed now to the darkness and to the light from the water. We were on an island. I had no

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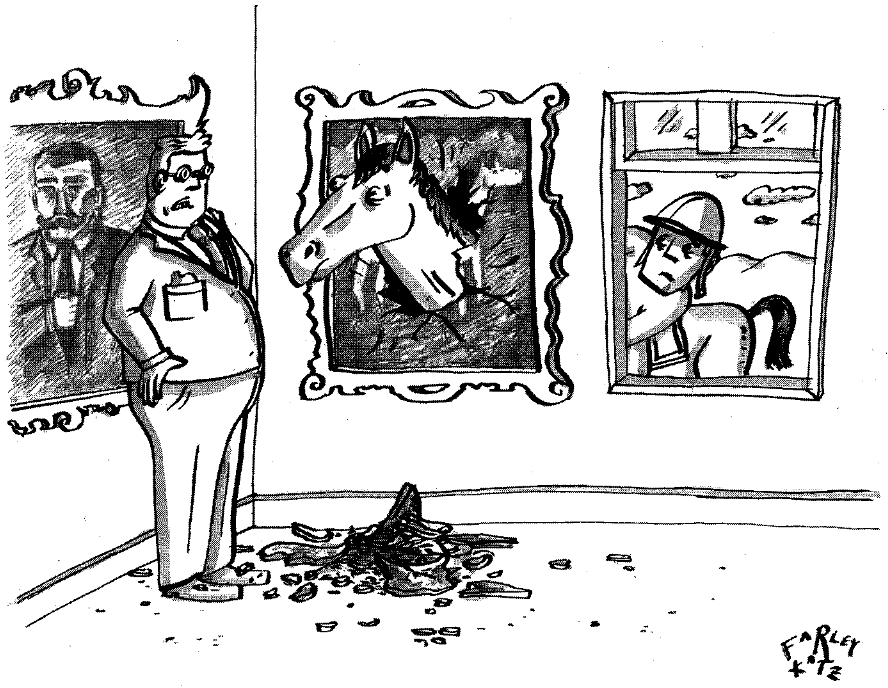

"You're lucky that painting was of a horse."

watch. Luisa was sleeping and Inés was sleeping, too, each in her own room, lying diagonally across a double bed. Perhaps they missed us in their sleep. Or perhaps not, perhaps they felt relieved.

"But all that effort is over now. It no longer matters. What matters is my adoration, my immutable adoration. So identical to what it was sixteen years ago that I can't see it changing in the near future. And it would be disastrous if it did change. I've been devoted to her for too long now, devoted to her growing up, to her education. I couldn't live any other way. For her, though, it's different. She has fulfilled her childhood dream, her childhood fixation, and five years ago, when she came to live with me, she was as happy as or even happier than I was, because my house had been entirely designed for her. But her character is still developing. She's very dependent on novelty; she's drawn to the outside world; she's looking around to see what else there is and what awaits her beyond me. Don't think I don't understand that. On the contrary. I foresaw that it would happen, but the fact that I understand doesn't help one iota. We all have to lead our own life, and we have only the one life, and the only people who can live life not according to their own desires are those who have no desires—which is the majority, actually. People can say what they like, they can speak of abnegation, sacrifice, generosity, acceptance, and resignation, but it's all false. The norm is for people to think that they desire whatever comes to them, whatever they achieve along the way or whatever is given to them—they have no preconceived desires. My adoration is excessive. That's what makes it adoration. The length of time I had to wait was excessive, too. And now I continue to wait, but the nature of my waiting has been turned on its head. Before, I was waiting to gain something; now all I can expect is for it to end. Before, I was waiting to be given a gift; now I expect only loss. Before, I was waiting for growth; now I expect decay. Not just mine, you understand, but hers, too, and that's something that I'm not prepared for. You're probably thinking that I'm making too many assumptions, that nothing is entirely foreseeable, just as the order of our dying is unforeseeable, as I said before. And perhaps we will grow old together. But if that were the case, if all those years together did lie ahead of us, my adoration would still lead me to the same situation. Or do you imagine that I could allow my adoration to die? Do you think I could watch her age and deteriorate without resorting to the sole remedy that exists, namely, that she should die first? Do you imagine that, having known her as a seven-year-old (a seven-year-old), I could bear to see Inés in her fifties or even her forties, with no trace of her childhood left? Don't be absurd. It's like asking some particularly long-lived father to celebrate the old age of his own children. Parents refuse to see their children transformed into old people. They hate them. They jump over them, and see only their grandchildren, if they have any. Time is always opposed to what it originated, to what *is*."

Viana buried his face in his hands, as I had seen him do from above. And I saw then that this gesture had nothing to do with suppressed laughter but was evidence of a kind of panic that nevertheless failed to ruffle his serenity. I glanced up at my balcony again and at the other balconies, but all still lay in silence, dark and empty, as if beyond the balconies, beyond the windows and the net curtains, inside the numerous identical rooms, there was no one sleeping—no Luisa, no Inés, no one. He went on speaking, his face still covered.

"That's why time offers no solution. I would rather kill her than allow my adoration to die, you understand. I would rather kill her than allow her to leave me, than allow my adoration to continue without its object. I can delay it for as long as possible, but it's only a matter of time. And just in case, you see, I film her every day."

"Haven't you ever considered killing yourself?" I blurted out. I had been listening to him not because I wanted to but because I could do nothing else. I felt that the best way of not taking part in the conversation was to say nothing, to behave as if I were the mere repository of his confidences, without offering any objections or advice, without refuting or agreeing or being shocked. My eyes felt itchy. I wished that Luisa's sheets would slide off her and wake her up, that she would notice my absence and, like me, go out onto the balcony, that she would see me down below, by the swimming pool, in the feeble glow cast by the moon on the water, and summon me upstairs. I'll have to read the newspapers closely from now on, I thought, as I sat listening to him. Each time there's a headline about a woman who has died at the hands of a man, I'll have to read the whole article until I find their names. What a drag. Now I'll always fear that Inés is the dead

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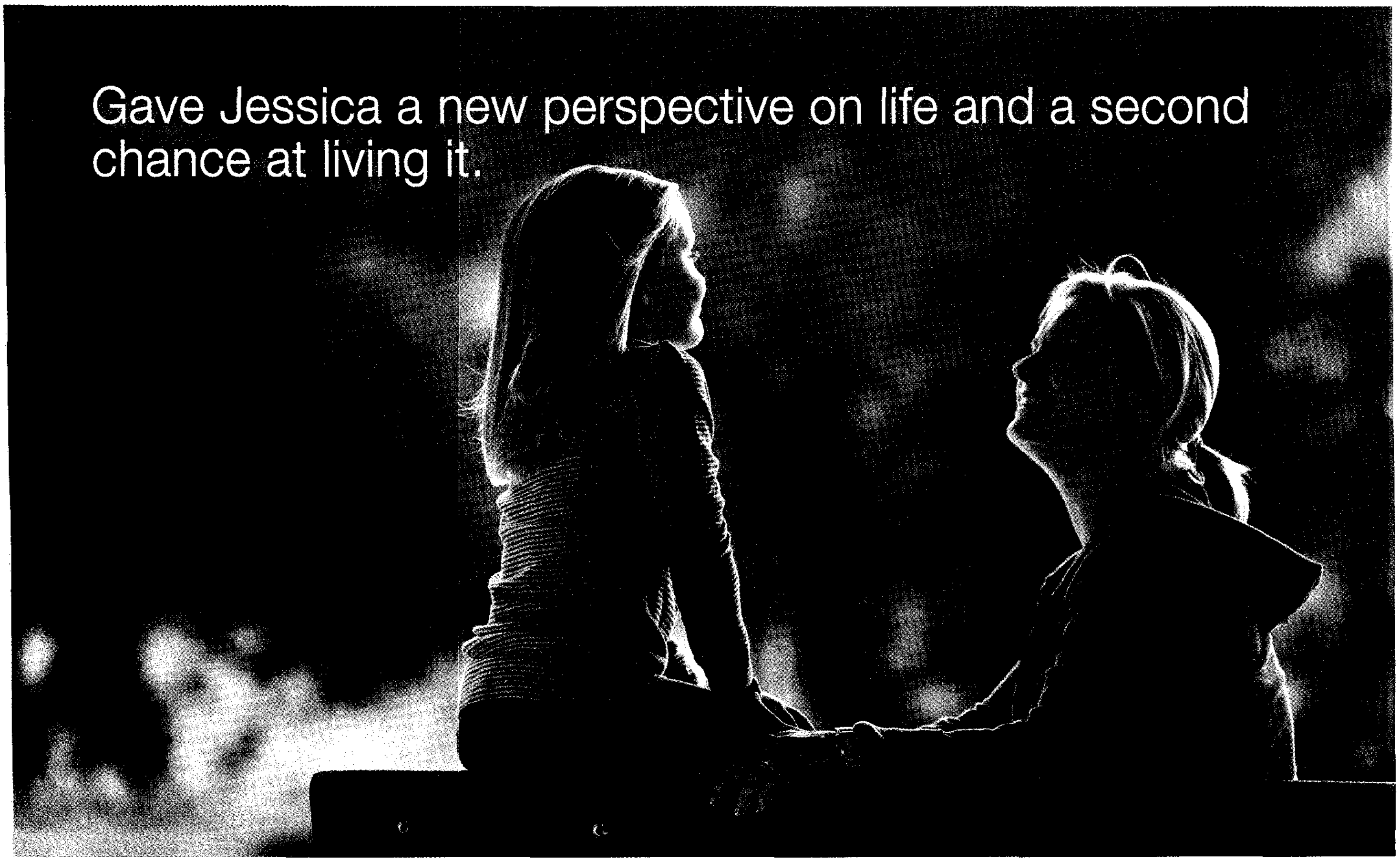
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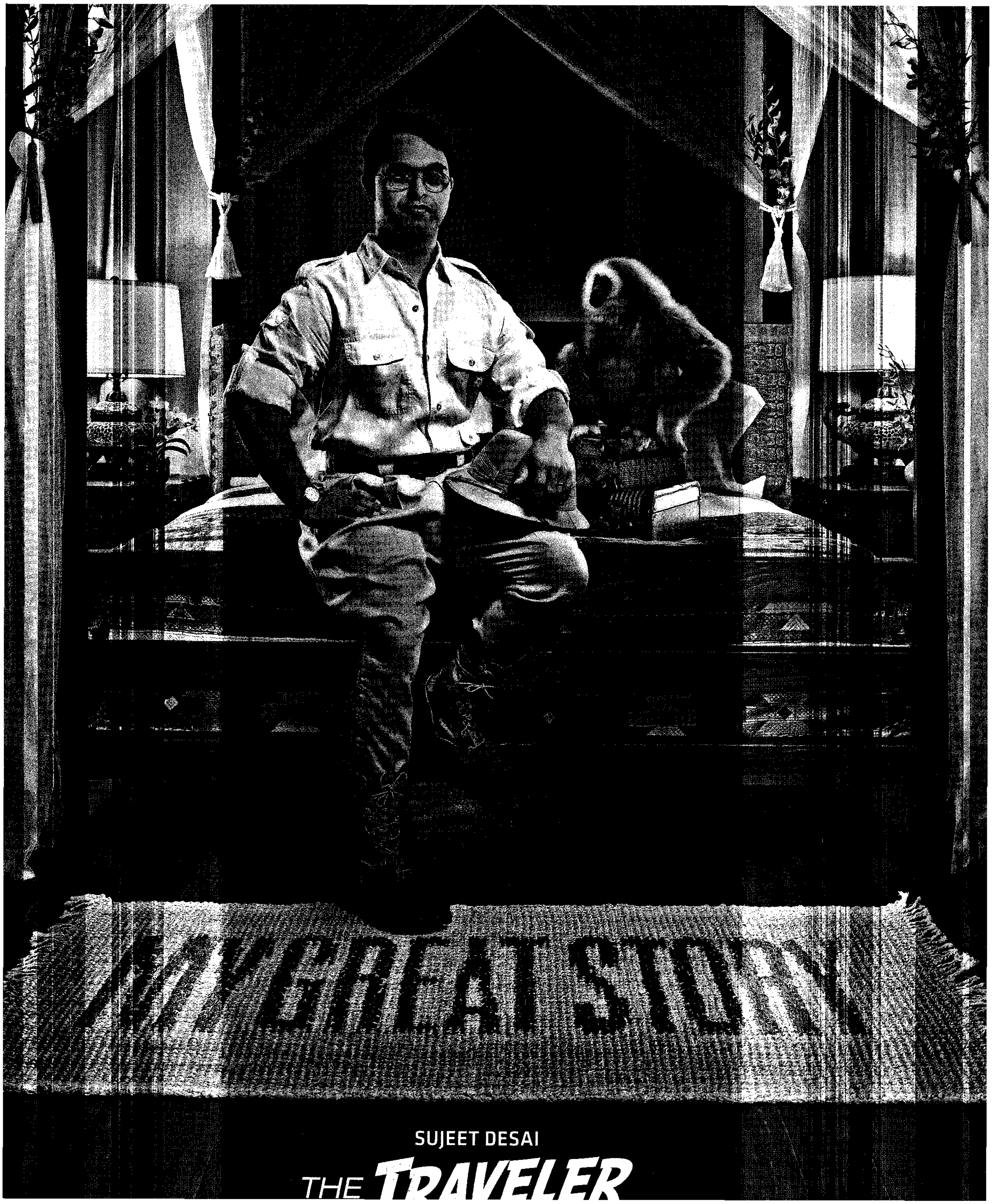
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woman and Viana the man who killed her. Although it might all be lies, everything he's telling me, here on this island, while the women are sleeping.

"Kill myself? That wouldn't be right," Viana answered, removing his hands from his face. He looked at me with an expression more of amusement than of surprise, or so it seemed in the darkness.

"It would be even less right for you to kill Inés just so that you can continue to adore her on tape once she's dead."

"No, you haven't understood. It would be right for me to kill her for the reasons I've explained. No one willingly gives up his way of life if he has a fairly good idea of how he wants to live it, and I do, which is unusual. And—how can I put it?—murder is a very male practice, just as execution is, but not suicide, which is as common among women as it is among men. Earlier, I mentioned that Inés has a glimmering of what lies beyond me, but beyond me there is nothing. For her, at least, there is nothing. She may not realize it yet, but she should. If I were to kill myself, that wouldn't be the case, and beyond me there must be nothing, do you see?"

Viana's foot appeared to have dried off, but the sock on the back of the lounge chair was still dripping rapidly onto the grass. I could almost feel its dampness on my own shod feet. I could imagine what it would be like to put that wet sock on. I took off my left shoe so as to scratch the sole of that foot with the black moccasin on my right foot.

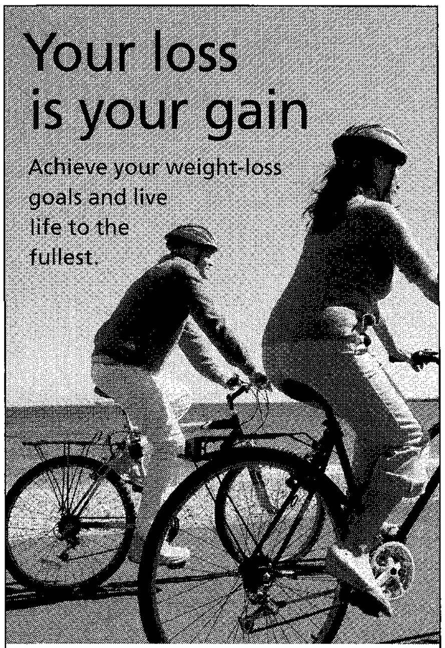
"Why are you telling me all this? Aren't you afraid I'll report you? Or talk to Inés in the morning?"

Viana laced his fingers behind his neck and leaned back in his lounge chair, and his bald head touched the wet sock. He reacted at once and sat up again, as you do when a fly brushes your skin. He put on the red moccasin that he had taken off some time before, when I was still standing on our balcony, and this somehow dissipated any air of helplessness he might have had, and it occurred to me suddenly that the conversation might end.

"You can't report intentions," he said. "We leave for Barcelona tomorrow. You and I will never see each other again. We leave early—there'll be no time to go to the beach. Tomorrow, you'll have forgotten all about this. You won't want to remember. You won't take it seriously. You won't try to find out anything. You won't even tell your wife what we talked about—why worry her?—because deep down you don't want to believe me. You'll manage, don't worry." Viana hesitated, then went on, "You may not think so, but if you were to warn Inés you would simply accelerate the process, and I would have to kill her tomorrow, do you understand?" He hesitated again, looked up at the sky, at the moon, and down at the water, then repeated that gesture of panic, covering his face, and continued speaking. "And who's to say that you would be able to speak to her tomorrow? Who's to say that I didn't kill her already—tonight, before coming down here? Who's to say that she isn't already dead and that's why I'm talking to you now? Anyone can die at any moment. We've known this since we were children. You left your own wife sleeping, but how do you know that she hasn't died while you've been down here talking to me? Perhaps she's dying right now. How do you know that Inés didn't die, at my hands—and that's why I shaved off my mustache—before you came down, before I came down? Or Inés *and* your wife? How do you know that both of them haven't died while they were sleeping?"

I didn't believe him. Inés's ideal beauty was resting, her eight rings on the bedside table, her voluminous breasts safely under the sheets, her breathing regular, her identical lips half open like a child's, her hairless pubis leaving a slight stain, that strange nocturnal secretion women make. Luisa was asleep, I had seen her, her fine-featured, open, and as yet unlined face, her restless eyes moving beneath her eyelids, as if they couldn't get used to not doing at night what they did during the day—unlike Inés's eyes, which were probably quite still now, during the sleep she needed to maintain her immutable beauty. Both were sleeping—that's why they hadn't come out onto their balconies. Luisa hadn't died in my absence, however long it had been. Instinctively, I glanced up toward the rooms, toward my balcony and toward all the balconies, and on one of them I saw a figure wrapped in a sheet toga and heard it call to me twice, say my name, as mothers say their children's names. I stood up. But on Inés's balcony, whichever it was, there was no one. ♦

(*Translated, from the Spanish, by Margaret Jull Costa.*)



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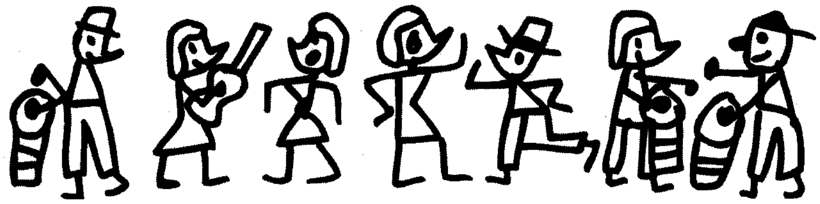


THE THEATRE

CLASS WARS

Patrick Marber updates Strindberg.

BY JOHN LAHR

Patrick Marber's "After Miss Julie" (a Roundabout Theatre Company production at the American Airlines), a version of August Strindberg's gnarly, pathfinding 1888 tragedy about class division and desire, puts a new engine in an old chassis; the problem is internal combustion. In transposing the play from late-nineteenth-century Sweden to England in July, 1945, on the night of the British Labour Party's landslide victory over Winston Churchill and the Conservatives at the end of the Second World War—a paradigm shift that would usher in the welfare state—Marber strips much of the need from the characters' conflict and gums up the dramatic machinery. As a result, the vehicle accelerates swiftly, only to lose traction and spin out of control.

Of the many circumstances that drive the original, aristocratic Miss Julie into her kitchen to dance with the valet—dusk, the Midsummer festival, her period, her broken engagement, her father's absence from their stately home—the most essential is her hysteria. As we learn in the play's first lines, Miss Julie has a habit of making a reckless spectacle of herself. By turning sexual and social decorum on its head, she projects her craziness onto others: they end up confounded, instead of her. Alternately sadistic and seductive, her manic behavior broadcasts her suicidal stalemate. She wants to be "under the ground," she says early in the original play. She feels the immanence of decline, and she uses her wounds as a lure. "I am coming down in the world," she admits to Jean, the valet. He, by contrast, is defined by his desire to rise. Each needs something in the other, though they don't need each other. Jean sees Miss Julie and her wealth (consciously) as a chance at life; Miss Julie sees Jean and his forcefulness (unconsciously) as a chance at death.

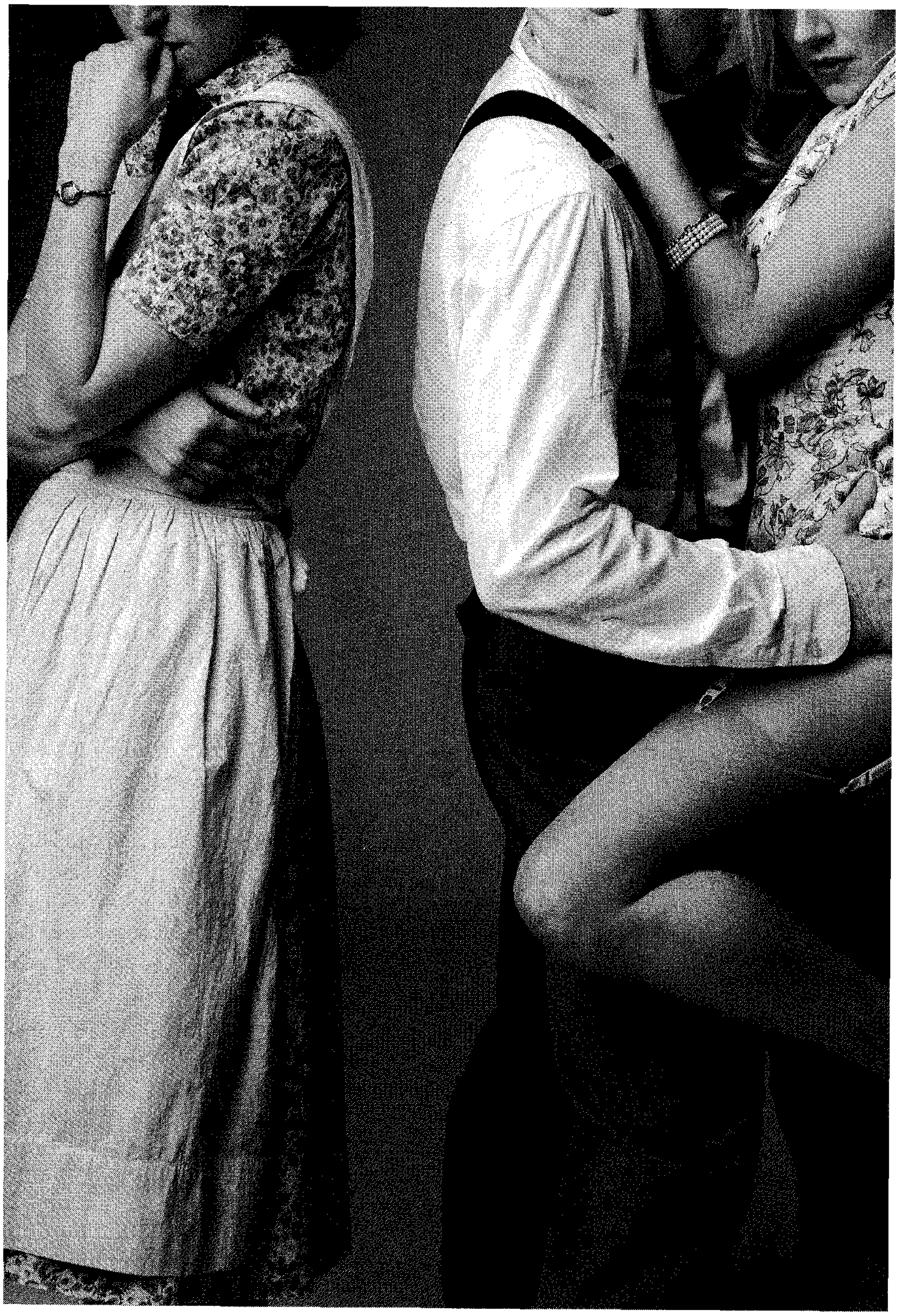
Marber's version—which was written as a TV play before being reimagined for the stage, in 2003, and is directed here by Mark Brokaw—trades penetration for polish. At his best, Marber, the author of "Dealer's Choice" and "Closer," among other plays, writes muscular, cunning dialogue. In the early moments of "After Miss Julie," the self-made John, upgraded to chauffeur, savors a glass of his boss's wine. "Like Winston Churchill: robust, full-bodied," he says, draining the glass. "And finished." Marber, who began as a comedy writer, is a master of the rebarbative, especially when negotiating the cruel riptide of Miss Julie's split personality. For instance, there's the moment of disenchantment for both servant and mistress that follows their passionate coupling:

> JULIE: Am I your conquest? Nothing more?
> JOHN: Don't force me to be cruel.
> JULIE: Tell me what I am.
> (*Pause.*)
> JOHN: A fuck.
> JULIE (*childlike, to herself*): I'm all dirty.
> JOHN: So wash.
> JULIE: STAND UP WHEN YOU SPEAK TO ME! STAND UP! REMEMBER YOUR POSITION!
> JOHN (*He stands*): Which one, Madame? There were so many.
> JULIE: You're still a servant, you scared little squaddie, you're still a servant.
> JOHN: And you're a servant's slut.

But Marber has made a strategic mistake by shifting the saga to mid-twentieth-century Britain; the British style of understatement clashes with the hysteric's narcissistic need to narrate the self, and much of Strindberg's heat and hurt are lost. In Allen Moyer's deftly designed, dingy kitchen, dominated by a long pine table, which, during the course of the evening, comes to represent the social divide between chauffeur and lady of the house, John (Jonny Lee Miller) and Christine (the compelling Marin Ireland), the cook and his bride-to-be, gossip about the caprice of their mistress, who is cutting a swath through the help at a dance in the barn, just offstage. They describe her variously as "off her head," "off her rocker," and "barking mad"—which is in keeping with the way Strindberg sets up the arrival of his dervish of self-destruction. In Strindberg's tale, Miss Julie first appears at the kitchen doorway "speaking to someone outside"; she is distracted and in motion. Ferocity and fragility are at war in her. "Miss Julie is also a relic of the old warrior nobility now giving way to the new nobility of nerve and brain," Strindberg wrote in his introduction. In this buttoned-down production, however, when Miss Julie (Sienna Miller) appears in the doorway there's no hint of the frenetic, nothing nervy or hectic about her. In a trim print dress, with perfectly coiffed blond hair, she is a picture of commanding cool: all svelte silhouette and cigarettes, more Coward charm than Strindberg alarm. Miller, to be sure, is an eyeful: a slim, zesty bourgeois English lass who, unfortunately, doesn't carry her reputation for offstage wildness into the scene. Her fine bones bear no hint of patrician ennui; beauty, in this reductive version, substitutes for nobility.

To be fair to Miller, much of her character's motivation has been bowdlerized; we don't properly know the stakes of her struggle. Strindberg's Miss Julie is haunted by the ghosts of her parents: an emancipated but Draconian mother, long dead—who gave eccentric rein to her hatred of men by forcing the men on the family estate to do the women's work, while the women took on the men's roles—and a weak, suicidal father,

ABOVE: MARISCAL



Marin Ireland, Jonny Lee Miller, and Sienna Miller in "After Miss Julie." Photograph by .

who is an absent presence. In the Marber version, the backstory is glossed into a few oblique, albeit well-turned lines. "How can *you* see?" Miss Julie says to John, reflecting on her tormented childhood. "You watch the world through eyes filled with acid." For the most part, however, subtext stands in for psychology. Marber's stylization is right out of the Harold Pinter Playbook. (Miss Julie's flirtation with John in the presence of his fiancée, for instance, echoes the game of slap-and-tickle in which Ruth calls Lenny's sexual bluff in "The Homecoming.") Leaning against the kitchen table, Miss Julie proffers a shapely gam in John's direction. "Now, kiss my shoe. As a sign of respect," she says, dangling her leg, then yanking it away a couple of times before John finally grabs her open-toed shoe and kneels down to do her bidding. For the erotic charge of this punishing moment, Miller's containment is exactly right; for Miss Julie's tragic flaw, and the sexual chemistry between her and John, however, the underplaying is exactly wrong. (Jonny Lee Miller's smoldering reserve, by contrast, suits his servile position and clearly illustrates the class envy that drives the sex and the hate.) To understand Miss Julie's toxic mood swings, her refusal to surrender, and her longing for a savior, the audience needs more than sensational spectacle. Sexuality, for Strindberg, is a response to internal problems. He explains perhaps too much of Miss Julie's interior life. Marber, on the other hand, explains too little. He trusts that her behavior will convey everything, but it can't, and doesn't. The result, it seems to me, is the opposite of Strindberg. Instead of luring the heart away from safety, Marber cossets it with melodrama.

To fuel the play's atmosphere of hysteria, Strindberg contrived to keep John and his heroine alone together so that they could have sex. In the original, the revelling townsfolk become a sort of drunken posse of outraged plebs, who march on the house to taunt Miss Julie for a transgression that has jeopardized both her future and John's. The lovers are forced to barricade themselves inside. In nineteenth-century provincial Sweden, this behavior was plausible. In "After Miss Julie," John and Miss Julie batten down the windows and doors to hide from a partygoing, victory-crazed group of servants. The day that Marber's preposterous premise rings true, gallstones will be jewelry. The audience can never really suspend its disbelief. As a result, despite its showy surface, "After Miss Julie" doesn't earn its tragic conclusion.

If Marber leaves too much out, Joe DiPietro and David Bryan, who wrote the twenty-two-song musical "Memphis" (at the Shubert, under the direction of Christopher Ashley), leave too much in. The musical tells the story of the rise of rock and roll from race records to the mainstream, through the reluctant love affair of a Beale Street blues singer and a maverick, illiterate white fan, who becomes a radio d.j. and spokesman for the rowdy new form of music. Two other Broadway shows—"Hairspray" and "Bye Bye Birdie"—have recently worked this rich vein of nostalgia. Of the three, "Memphis"—which is overproduced, overamplified, and, at nearly three hours, overlong—could be considered the Really Big Bopper: a sort of musical behemoth that bullies you with its energy until you give in and like it. O.K., I give.

The loosey-goosey Chad Kimball, who plays Huey, the d.j., turns in an exceptional performance, full of charm and mischief, as the lost soul who finds his mission in delivering black music to a white audience. Kimball manages to convey the spirit of rebellion in the sound. Felicia, the object of his desire, is played by the gamine Montego Glover, a petite woman with a big voice, who exudes an aura of fetching sweetness. I'll give a shout-out also to the hardworking and high-stepping ensemble.

The musical's book checks off all the thematic boxes: prejudice, violence, hardship, stardom, failure, and redemption. Although, for Huey and Felicia, love doesn't find a way, "Memphis" allows them a union in success, which, on Broadway, trumps love. You leave "Memphis" knowing that you've had an exciting experience, but—unable to recall a song, a melody, or a line of dialogue—you can't quite remember what it was. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

From the San Francisco Chronicle.

Fresno County authorities have arrested a man they say broke into the home of two farmworkers, rubbed one with spices and whacked the other with a sausage before fleeing.

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BRIEFLY NOTED

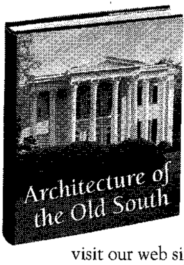
The Humbling, *by Philip Roth (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; $22).* Roth’s slender thirtieth novel is about a famous stage actor in his sixties who has lost his ability to act. “Shorn of his skills, alone, workless, and in persistent pain,” he confines himself to his farmhouse in upstate New York. His solitude and despair are broken by an affair with a lesbian twenty-five years his junior. Even as he gives himself up to the relationship, he is mistrustful, wondering whether he hasn’t been “blinded by a stupendous and desperate illusion.” The novel, bleak, uncertain, and full of fear, finds traction in familiar Rothian interrogations—of the self’s deviousness, the impossible murkiness of motive, and the performative nature of identity—and it is these which produce the book’s cruellest apprehension: “The failures were his, as was the bewildering biography on which he was impaled.”

The Man in the Wooden Hat, *by Jane Gardam (Europa; $15).* In this understated novel, Gardam returns to the successful barrister and judge Sir Edward Feathers, the protagonist of her deliciously acerbic “Old Filth.” The complementary tale, told largely from the point of view of Feathers’s wife, Betty, a fellow-“Raj orphan,” begins as the two make “a prudent marriage not for love,” in Hong Kong after the Second World War. The story briskly follows their fifty-year union from adulterous beginnings and unhappy childlessness to a companionable old age in England, after the handover of Hong Kong. Haunting the entire marriage is an allegorical albatross (named, cutely, Albert Ross), a dwarfish Chinese solicitor whose eerie presence enforces the couple’s tremendous, and perhaps ill-considered, marriage vows. Like Gardam’s other novels, this work has satiric charm, but, just as the lovers never crack one another’s “unassailable privacy,” Gardam never lets the reader meaningfully trespass on their inner lives.

The American Leonardo, *by John Brewer (Oxford; $24.95).* In 1919, a Midwestern auto salesman named Harry Hahn and his French war bride, Andrée, got in touch with Joseph Duveen, the famous New York art dealer, with an offer to sell what they claimed was an original painting by Leonardo da Vinci. Duveen publicly dismissed the work as a fake, and the Hahns, taking him to court for slander, began a decades-long struggle for authentication that scrutinized not only the art world’s élitism but the validity of connoisseurship itself. Brewer skillfully outlines the conditions that made America ripe for such an incident and explores how Old Master art became the currency with which the country’s new millionaires established their cultural credibility. As the Hahns’ Leonardo travels from France to Kansas, from Hollywood to London, undoing its various stewards in the process, Brewer remains focussed on the book’s central questions: “When you look at a picture how do you know who painted it; how do you know that it is a great work of art?”

Eating, *by Jason Epstein (Knopf; $25).* This convivial memoir by a distinguished publisher charts a lifetime of cooking and consumption, from childhood efforts to conceal from a grandmother the mediocrity of her culinary efforts to the contentment of making a blueberry pie for grandchildren. Naturally, there are many publisher’s lunches—the work, Epstein insists, “is performed with knife and fork”—with Jackie Onassis and Roy Cohn, among others. Even more enlivening are memories of vanished New York haunts, a spectacular gastronomic tour of Europe while honeymooning in the early fifties, and a college job in a grim Cape Cod kitchen among temperamental “drifters, who may have learned their trade at sea or in the services or prison.” Recipes are picked out in rust-colored text, but Epstein resists measurements, asserting that “recipes should be more like stories than like maps or formulae.”

BOOKS ABOUT THE SOUTH



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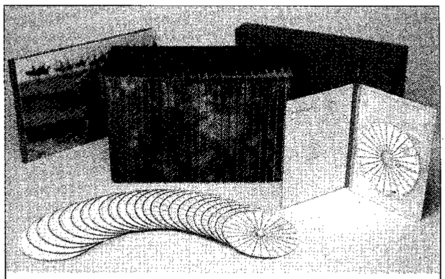

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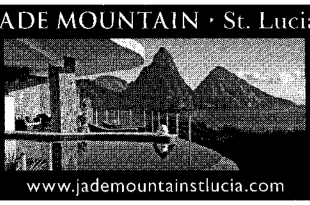

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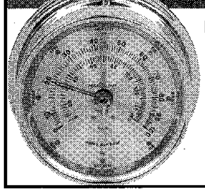

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BOOKS

THE THINGS PEOPLE SAY

Rumors in an age of unreason.

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

This past June, Representative Mike Castle held a town-hall meeting at a community center in Georgetown, Delaware. Castle, a Republican, is the state's only House member, and he had invited half a dozen health-care experts to take questions from his constituents. A woman in a red shirt spent most of the meeting with her hand in the air. When Castle called on her, she rose from her seat, clutching a ziplock bag filled with papers and a miniature American flag.

"Congressman Castle," she began. "I have a birth certificate here from the United States of America saying I'm an American citizen. With a seal on it. Signed by a doctor. With a hospital administrator's name, my parents, my date of birth, the time, the date. I want to go back to January 20th and I want to know: why are you people ignoring his birth certificate?"

"Yeah!" a man in the audience shouted. The Congressman appeared flummoxed. The health-care experts looked on, impassively.

"He is not an American citizen," the woman in red went on. "He is a citizen of Kenya.

"I am American," she continued. "My father fought in World War Two with the greatest generation in the Pacific theatre." She waved the flag and the ziplock bag in Castle's direction. "And I don't want this flag to change. I want my country back!" The community center erupted in applause.

The phenomenon known variously as the "birther movement," the "birther conspiracy," and the "birther nut-job fantasy" is now roughly two years old. Its adherents hold that Barack Obama, owing to his birthplace (wherever that may be), is ineligible to be President. As articles of faith go, this one falls somewhere between a belief in Santa Claus and "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Obama's birth certificate, which has been posted on the Internet, shows that he was delivered in Honolulu on August 4, 1961, at 7:24 P.M. Further confirmation of these facts exists in the form of birth announcements that appeared in two Honolulu newspapers, the *Advertiser* and the *Star-Bulletin*, the relevant pages of which have also been scanned and posted on the Web. So unambiguous is the evidence that a spokesman for the Republican National Committee has called the question of Obama's birthplace an "unnecessary distraction," and most elected officials have either ignored it or dismissed it as nonsense.

"If you're referring to the President there, he is a citizen of the United States," Representative Castle told the woman in red. (Her response was to lead the crowd in an impromptu recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.)

Still, the birthers are legion. So far, more than half a dozen lawsuits have been filed alleging that Obama is not a "natural born" citizen. One plaintiff, an Army reservist from Georgia, argued in court that he couldn't be sent to fight in Afghanistan because the military lacked a Commander-in-Chief. In a poll released over the summer, twenty-eight per cent of the Republicans surveyed said that they did not think Obama was born in the U.S., and thirty per cent said that they were unsure, meaning that fully half took birther ideas seriously enough to doubt the legitimacy of their government. When a video of the woman in red was posted on YouTube, it quickly went viral; within a few weeks, it had received some eight hundred thousand hits.

That such a wacky idea should be so persistent is, to put it mildly, disquieting. Here we are, quadrillions of bytes deep into the Information Age. And yet information, it seems, has never mattered less.

According to Cass R. Sunstein, the situation was to be anticipated. Sunstein, who for many years taught at the University of Chicago Law School, recently became the head of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. One of the country's most prolific legal scholars—"He seems to write a book about as often as most people run the dishwasher" is how *Esquire* once put it—Sunstein has long been preoccupied with what might be called "virtual civics." He has written four books on this topic—"Republic.com" (2001), "Infotopia" (2006), "Republic.com 2.0" (2007), and, now, "On Rumors: How Falsehoods Spread, Why We Believe Them, What Can Be Done" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $18)—all, to varying degrees, dystopic.

The Internet makes it easy for extremists to chat with their soul mates.

ERIC PALMA

Sunstein begins with the relatively uncontroversial premise that a vigorous exchange of information is critical to the democratic process. As he acknowledges, the Web makes virtually unlimited amounts of information available; it is now possible to sit in a coffee shop in New York and read not just the newspapers from Chicago, Boston, and Los Angeles but also those from Cairo, Beijing, and London, while simultaneously receiving e-mail alerts on the latest movie openings and corporate mergers. From this, it is often argued that the Internet is a boon to democracy—if information is good, then more information must be better. But, in Sunstein's view, the Web has a feature that is even more salient: at the same time that it makes more news available, it also makes more news avoidable.

"The most striking power provided by emerging technologies," he has written, is the "*growing power of consumers to 'filter' what they see.*" Many of the most popular Web sites are still those belonging to the major news channels and papers—CNN, the BBC, the New York *Times*. Increasingly, though, people are getting information from these sites in a customized form, by subscribing to e-mails and RSS feeds on their favorite topics and skipping subjects they find less congenial. Meanwhile, some of the fastest-growing sites are those which explicitly cater to their users' ideologies. Left-leaning readers know, for example, that if they go to the Huffington Post or to AlterNet they will find stories that support their view of the world. Right-leaning readers know to go to the Drudge Report or to Newsmax to find stories that fit their preconceptions.

And what holds true for the news sites is even more so for the blogosphere, where it's possible to spend hours surfing without ever entering new waters. Conservative blogs like Power Line almost always direct visitors to other conservative blogs, like No Left Turns, while liberal blogs like Daily Kos guide them to others that are also liberal, like Firedoglake. A study of the twenty most-visited blogs in each camp in the months leading up to the 2004 Presidential election found that more than eighty-five per cent of their links were to other blogs with similar politics. When the study's authors charted the links in graphic form, they came up with a picture of non-interaction—a dense scribble on one side, a dense scribble on the other, and only the thinnest strands connecting the two. In 2006, Sunstein performed his own study of fifty political sites. He found that more than four-fifths linked to like-minded sites but only a third linked to sites with an opposing viewpoint. Moreover, many of the links to the opposing side's sites were offered only to illustrate how "dangerous, dumb, or contemptible the views of the adversary really are."

"I do not mean to deny the obvious fact that any system that allows for freedom of choice will create some balkanization of opinion," Sunstein writes, in "Republic.com 2.0." "Long before the advent of the Internet, and in an era of a handful of television stations, people made self-conscious choices among newspapers and radio stations." But, he argues, Web culture takes choice to a new level.

In 1970, two psychologists at a small college in Michigan performed the following experiment. After administering a questionnaire on racial attitudes to seniors at some nearby high schools, they divided the students into groups. Those students who, based on their answers to the questionnaire, exhibited "high prejudice" were placed

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with others equally biased. Those who expressed "low prejudice" were grouped with those who were similarly tolerant. The students were then instructed to discuss issues like school busing and fair housing. Finally, they were asked to fill out another questionnaire. The surveys revealed a striking pattern: simply by talking to one another, the bigoted students had become more bigoted and the tolerant more tolerant.

People's tendency to become more extreme after speaking with like-minded others has become known as "group polarization," and it has been documented in dozens of other experiments. In one, feminists who spoke with other feminists became more adamant in their feminism. In a second, opponents of same-sex marriage became even more opposed to the idea, while proponents shifted further in favor. In a third, doves who were grouped with other doves became more dovish still. (Interestingly, in this last experiment hawks, after talking to other hawks, became less hawkish, though they remained more hawkish than the doves.) Even judges have been shown to exhibit "group polarization." Democratic appointees who sit with other Democrats are, it's been found, more likely to cast liberal votes than Democratic appointees who sit with Republicans, while Republican appointees on all-Republican panels are more likely to take conservative positions.

Why group polarization occurs is not entirely clear. According to one theory, when people engage in discussions with others who share their opinion they are apt to hear new arguments in favor of it, which prompts them to believe in it all the more strongly. According to a second theory, people are always trying to outdo one another; if everyone in a group agrees that men are jerks, then someone in the group is bound to argue that they're assholes. In ordinary life, there are, of course, many opportunities to engage in group polarization—at the country club, in the union hall, at church or in synagogue, at the monthly meeting of the local feminist book club. Here again, though, Sunstein maintains, the Web takes things to a whole new level. (Group polarization, it should be noted, is the subject of another recent Sunstein book, "Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide.") There is virtually no opinion an individual can hold that is so outlandish that he will not find other believers on the Web. "Views that would ordinarily dissolve, simply because of an absence of social support, can be found in large numbers on the Internet, even if they are understood to be exotic, indefensible, or bizarre in most communities," Sunstein observes. Racists used to have to leave home to meet up with other racists (or Democrats with other Democrats, or Republicans with Republicans); now they need not even get dressed in order to "chat" with their ideological soul mates.

"It seems plain that the Internet is serving, for many, as a breeding group for extremism, precisely because like-minded people are deliberating with greater ease and frequency with one another," Sunstein writes. He refers to this process as "cyberpolarization."

Put the Web's filtering tools together with cyberpolarization and what you get, by Sunstein's account, are the perfect conditions for spreading misinformation. Who, on liberal blogs, is going to object to (or even recognize) a few misstatements about Sarah Palin? And who, on conservative blogs, is going to challenge mistaken assertions (or, if you prefer, lies) about President Obama?

In the spring of 2008, as the general-election campaign was getting under way, several rumors were circulating about Obama. In addition to the one about his birthplace, there were rumors that he was a Muslim, that he had attended a madrassa in Indonesia, and that he refused to put his hand over his heart when reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Obama's campaign aides set up a Web site in response, called Fight the Smears. On it, they posted a clip of a CNN story showing the nondenominational school that Obama had attended in Jakarta and a video of Obama leading the U.S. Senate in the Pledge (with his hand over his heart). They also posted a scan of the candidate's birth certificate. "Next time someone talks about Barack's birth certificate, make sure they see this page," the message accompanying the scan read.

If the Web functioned as its boosters maintain—as a "frictionless" source of information—then that posting would have been the end of things. Instead, of course, it was just the beginning. When those who had been "talking about" Obama's birth certificate looked at it on the Web, what they saw was exactly the opposite of what the Obama campaign had intended. Some blogs noted that if the scan of the certificate was enlarged several times a light halo could be seen around each letter. The crosshatched border on the document did not seem to match the cross-hatching on another birth certificate issued in Hawaii around the same time. The scan did not show the raised seal required of an official state document. Nor did it reveal any crease marks. (A real birth certificate would have had to be folded before being sent in the mail.)

"The image is a horrible forgery," a self-described "forensic computer examiner" calling himself Techdude declared on the right-wing blog Atlas Shrugs.

"Enough work has been done by photoshop experts to show that this is not a real document," ClearCase_guy asserted on the conservative Web site Free Republic. "And that begs the question: WHY?"

Apparently still operating under the assumption that people turn to the Web for information, the Obama campaign tried again. It allowed FactCheck.org, a nonpartisan research organization, to inspect the document at the campaign's headquarters, in Chicago.

"FactCheck.org staffers have now seen, touched, examined and photographed the original birth certificate," the group's Web site announced on August 21, 2008. "Our conclusion: Obama was born in the U.S.A. just as he has always said." Nine high-resolution photos accompanied the post, showing the raised seal, as well as a set of creases.

The birthers were unfazed. "I, for one, of course, am not surprised," JM Hanes wrote on the Web site JustOneMinute. "I mean he's had more than two months to find a better forger." Others insisted that the birth certificate was meaningless, since it was just a computer-generated copy of the original handwritten or typed certificate that should have been filed with the state of Hawaii. When, on October 31, 2008, the Hawaiian health director, Chiyome Fukino, issued a statement saying that she had "personally seen and verified that the Hawai'i State Department of Health has Sen. Obama's original birth certificate on record," this evidence, too, was dismissed. At the time of Obama's Inauguration, the following joke was careering around the Web:

CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Knock, knock.
BARACK OBAMA: Who's there?
CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Kenya.
BARACK OBAMA: Kenya who?
CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Kenya show me your birth certificate before you're sworn in?

In July, when the clip of the woman in red went viral, Fukino felt compelled to announce, for a second time, that Obama had a valid birth certificate on

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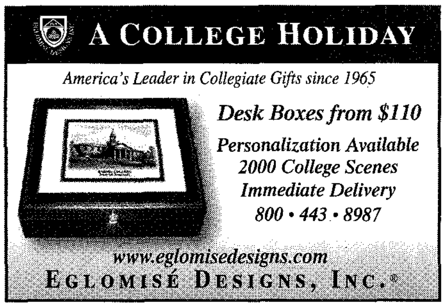
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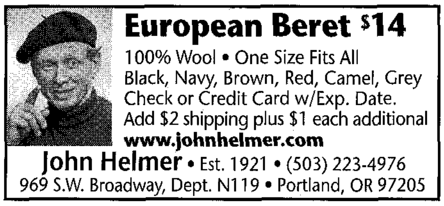
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file. FactCheck.org reported this development under the heading "The Last Word? We Wish."

Sunstein's theory of the (Dis)Information Age is pointedly nonjudgmental. By his account, the problem is basically structural: certain tendencies of the human mind interact badly with certain features of modern technology, much as certain prescription drugs interact badly with alcohol. Young or old, bigoted or tolerant, liberal or conservative—everyone is equally implicated here, since everyone is predisposed to the same, or at least analogous, mental habits and has access to the same technological tools. But does that really explain contemporary American politics?

The acquisition of knowledge is, as Sunstein points out, a social process: it is shaped by language, by custom, and, since the Enlightenment, by certain widely accepted standards of evidence and rationality. Suppose there is a debate that pits the National Academy of Sciences against a group of armchair meteorologists. Or, let's say there is a disagreement between Sarah Palin on the one side and every major medical and news organization in the country on the other. Whom are you going to believe? There really shouldn't be any contest here, and yet there is. For a great many Americans, global warming is a hoax and "death panels" a reality.

The most plausible explanation for this dark, post-Enlightenment turn is unavailable to Sunstein; so hard is he trying to be nonpartisan that he can't see the nuts for the trees. Several decades ago, a detachment of the American right cut itself loose from reason, and it has been drifting along happily ever since. If the birthers are more evidently kooky than the global-warming "skeptics" or the death-panellers or the supply-siders or the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, they are, in their fundamental disregard for the facts, actually mainstream. In a telling association, protesters at the anti-Obama rally held in Washington, D.C., on September 12th carried both "Where's the Birth Certificate?" placards and signs mocking climate legislation, as well as posters accusing the President of being a terrorist, a socialist, and a fascist. The historian Richard Hofstadter's description of the far right in the era of Barry Goldwater could apply equally well today: "I call it the paranoid style simply because no other word adequately evokes the qualities of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy that I have in mind."

Ironically enough, Sunstein himself has recently been the object of a right-wing disinformation campaign. As soon as word got out that he was going to be nominated by the Obama Administration to head the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, the American Conservative Union set up a Web site on him. It was called stopsunstein.com. The group objected to, among other things, a suggestion that Sunstein had made in a 2004 essay that animals be given legal standing. This (admittedly provocative) proposal was offered in the context of a discussion of how difficult it is to enforce existing laws against animal cruelty. It was quickly caricatured as an invitation to cows and chickens to clog up the dockets.

"Imagine returning from a successful hunting trip . . . only to find out that you've been subpoenaed for killing your prize," one online commentator railed. "Who knows, maybe Sunstein would have the family of the dead animal serving as witnesses in court!" Holds were placed on Sunstein's nomination by two Republican senators, other distortions of his writings were offered, and, finally, Fox News's Glenn Beck got into the act, exhorting, in a Twitter message to his supporters, "FIND EVERYTHING YOU CAN ON CASS SUNSTEIN." (In an interesting twist on group polarization, some liberal bloggers, who had initially not been keen on Sunstein's nomination, decided at this point that it must be O.K.; as one of them put it, "If Glenn Beck and the other loons are against him, how bad could he be?")

The Web is certainly a transformative technology, just as TV and radio and newspapers once were. There's a temptation, as a result, to confuse the medium with the message, to assume that, because the Internet is being used to produce a certain political effect, it was somehow destined to do so. This account is, in the end, too easy on us (or at least on them). To borrow that old favorite of the right: computers don't spread rumors; people do. ♦

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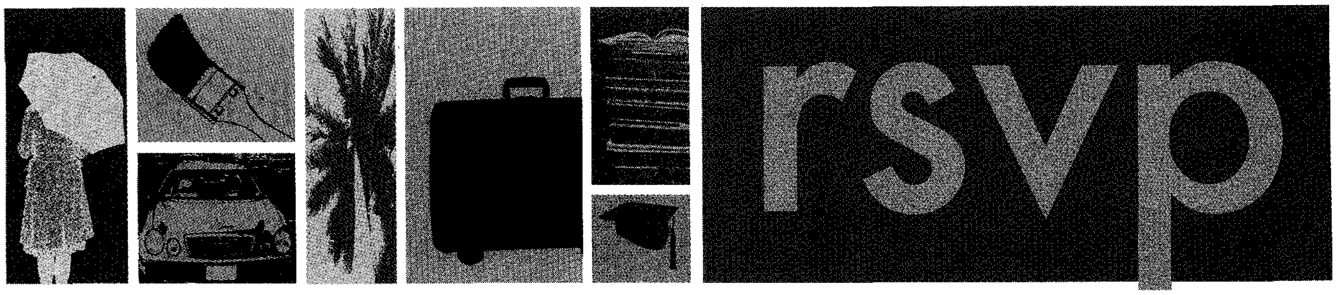

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THE ART WORLD

TWENTIETH-CENTURY MAN

An Arshile Gorky retrospective.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

The safest and loneliest place in the world, for a devotee of modern art, is within arm's length of any first-rate painting by Arshile Gorky, the subject of a galvanically moving retrospective at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In that zone, where the artist's decisions register kinesthetically, awakening your sense of touch as well as enchanting your eye, it is hard to doubt the value of the modernist adventure: a bet on the adequacy of sheer form, in the right hands, to compensate for a lost faith in established orders of civilization. No other artist has invested more ardor in naked technique: how to activate an edge, how to rhyme a color. Gorky was an academic painter in a modern academy of one. Take "Scent of Apricots on the Fields" (1944). A pileup of loosely outlined, thinly painted fragmentary shapes, like plant or body parts, embedded in passages of golden yellow, hovers above a green suggestion of a table and below a skylike expanse of brushy rose red. Dabs of raw turpentine cause runny dissolutions, as if some forms were melting into their white ground. The downward drips yield a paradoxical sensation of buoyancy. The picture's visceral shapes seem to ascend like putti in a Renaissance firmament. The dynamics are at once obvious and inspired, stroke by stroke and hue by hue, and deliriously affecting—when viewed near at hand.

From a distance, the work flummoxes evaluation. Its style fits only too comfortably into a period vogue of surrealistic abstraction—that of minor figures like André Masson and Roberto Matta, backed by the giants Picasso, Kandinsky, and Miró. Its content—romanticizing supposed memories of a boyhood that Gorky regularly lied about—is "poetic" in ways that turn treacly and banal when you try to appreciate them. Art history and biography are blind alleys in Gorky's case. His art feels contemporary, because no discursive account of the past can contain it. That also makes it a lonely enthusiasm, difficult to espouse. Still, he is the twentieth-century painter dearest to my heart.

Of what use is biography in assessing someone who made himself up? Gorky told people, including his wife, that he was Russian, a cousin of the writer Maxim Gorky (evidently unaware that "Maxim Gorky" was a pen name), born in the Caucasus in 1905 and educated in France. Actually, he was an Ottoman Armenian, Vosdanig Adoian, born circa 1902, in a village near Van. He couldn't speak Russian and never saw France. His father emigrated to America in 1908. His mother died in Yerevan, perhaps of starvation, in 1919, four years after the remaining family had fled the Turkish massacres of Armenians. In 1920, Adoian and a sister joined relatives in Watertown, Massachusetts. The first evidence of his new identity appears as the signature "Gorky, Arshele," on "Park Street Church, Boston," a skillful pastiche of Neo-Impressionism that he painted in 1924, while teaching at an art school in Boston. He admired the work of John Singer Sargent before latching onto Cézanne, as a god of art second only, later, to Picasso. Early imitations of Cézanne, in the show, are astonishingly acute. Cézanne is the foremost of painters who unfold their majesty to close-up inspection. (Gorky stumbled in his tyro emulations of Matisse and De Chirico, artists more reliant on over-all design.) With Gorky, influence is no incidental issue. I think he never ceased to regard his own creations vicariously, through the conjured eyes of heroes—he cited Uccello, Grünewald, Ingres, Seurat. He spoke with scorn of "originality" as a criterion of artistic value. His friend and self-declared disciple Willem de Kooning reported Gorky's remarking to him, "Aha, so you have ideas of your own." De Kooning recalled, "Somehow, that didn't seem so good."

The tall, preposterously handsome Gorky, who moved to New York in 1924

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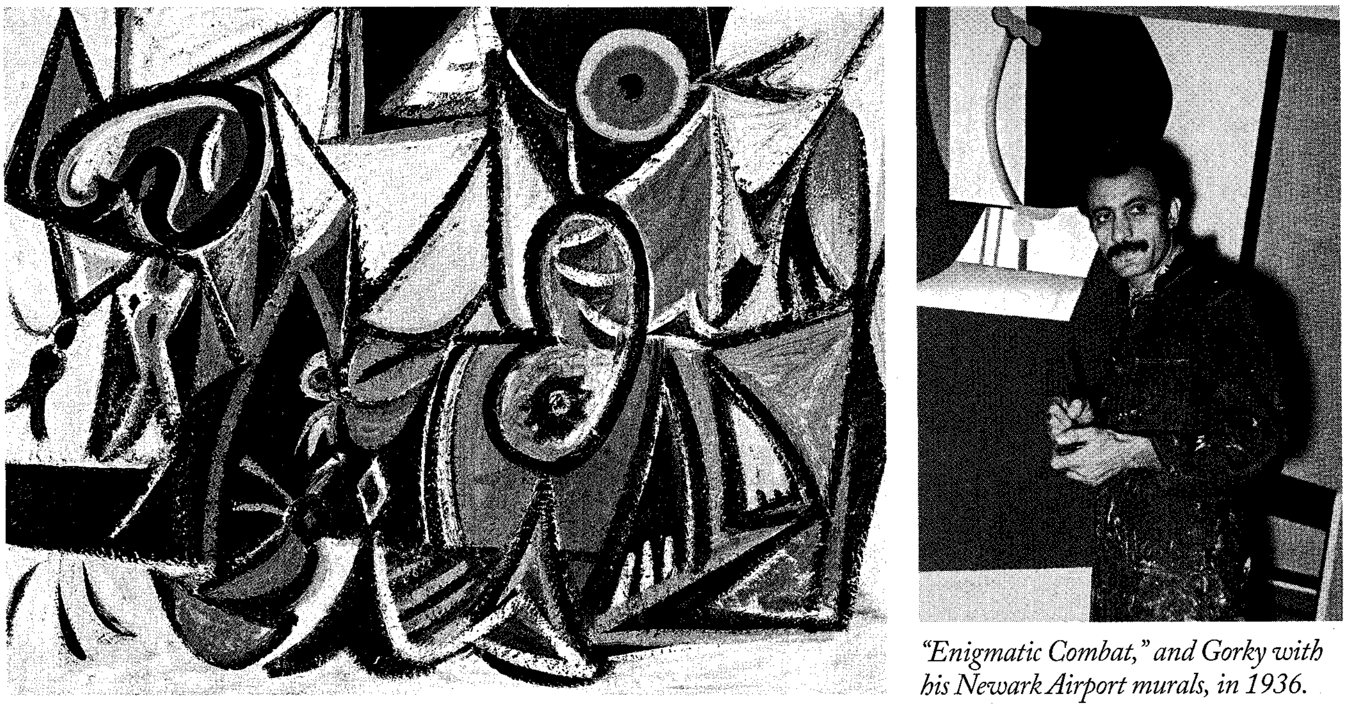
and took a studio on Union Square in 1930, was revered for his gifts, enjoyed for his clowning, and resented for his bossiness in the poverty-ravaged downtown art scene. Many women adored him. I incline to a partly cynical view of his famous images of himself as a painfully shy lad with his haunted-looking mother, based on a 1912 photograph. Gorky's suffering was surely real, but the pathos of the pictures strikes me as calculated to seduce. He wanted mothering. In politics, he was a loose cannon among radicals, an admirer of Stalin who pronounced social realism "poor art for poor people." In 1936, he produced W.P.A. murals, later mostly destroyed, for Newark Airport. (Photographs show him explaining the work to a visibly unimpressed Fiorello La Guardia.) Remnants of the murals, in the Philadelphia show, deploy a dashing, generic modern-artiness like that of his friend Stuart Davis. But Gorky's ambition centered on an intimate and desperate grappling with Picasso, whom he didn't so much emulate as channel, in a spirit nicely characterized by the critic Robert Storr in the show's catalogue: that of "a gifted pianist who habitually forgets in the middle of performing a canonical sonata that he has not composed it himself."



"Enigmatic Combat," and Gorky with his Newark Airport murals, in 1936.

Gorky's Picassoesque works of the thirties are commonly scanted in favor of the pictures with which, from about 1940 until his suicide, in 1948, he anticipated the triumphs of Abstract Expressionism. (His end was terrible, in a madness brought on by a studio fire that destroyed much of his recent work, an operation for rectal cancer, his beloved wife's affair with his best friend, and a crippling car crash.) But the drama of, say, "Enigmatic Combat" (1936-37), a sprightly patchwork of amoeboid and spiky shapes, rivets me. Its thickly layered surface bespeaks long, onerous toil for a kind of effect that Picasso brought off with ease. The task seems absurd. Gorky's self-abnegating success with it has the equivocal glory of a saint's welcomed martyrdom.

The Philadelphia show, curated by Michael R. Taylor, is probably overcrowded and definitely underlit (a consequence of interspersing paintings with drawings, which, in standard museum practice, require dim illumination). And it's wacky, in the big section representing the early forties, when Gorky abandoned his downtown friends for the relatively glittering society of refugees—including Léger and Duchamp—who embraced him. Walls painted with a wraparound, jagged band of gray, evoking exhibition styles that were à la mode at that time, emphasize a revisionist thesis that Taylor spells out in a catalogue essay—assigning Gorky's breakthrough works to European Surrealism rather than American abstraction. I'm sorry, but that's wrong. Gorky is ours. The exiles inspired him; André Breton celebrated him as "the only painter in America"; Matta taught him a crucial trick of divorcing crisp line from atmospheric washes of color. But the younger Surrealists, like Matta, were mediocrities on the down slope of a movement. De Kooning, Pollock, Rothko, and other locals grasped and developed the revolutionary implications of what Gorky did, which was, roughly, to scale every inch of a painting to the impact of the whole. American eyes saw through the lingering Surrealist clichés in his work—often sketchily abstracted sex organs—to a new, expansive, burstingly songful type of pictorial unity.

Textures of intensely sensitive touch, making forms quiver and squirm, are the most eloquent element in late Gorky. Color comes second, yet it, too, is extraordinary, evoking bodily wounds and inflammations and ungraspable subtleties of nature. Drawing, though busily abundant, feels incidental, like fleeting thoughts of a mind in the grip of an extreme emotion. I am convinced that, had Gorky lived, he would have suppressed line, perhaps in a way that, absent him, fell to Rothko. He would also undoubtedly have undertaken bigger canvases, in the budding New York School manner. "Untitled" (1943-48), a medium-sized and not quite resolved painting, of scrappy shapes jittering in a surface of hot orange scumbled over a muted yellow, feels pregnant with promises of engulfing wonderment. The closing chords of Gorky's unfinished symphony remain incipient. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Tales of Amelia Earhart, Valery Gergiev, and the Paris Opera Ballet.

BY DAVID DENBY

In "Amelia," Hilary Swank, playing Amelia Earhart, the celebrity aviatrix of the nineteen-twenties and thirties, has a big, toothy smile, high cheekbones, and short hair that seems to have been chopped with a knife. Earhart's clothes—men's pants, shirts, and leather flying jackets—perfectly suit Swank's lean, small-hipped body. The actress carries herself with an endearing mixture of boldness and shyness—the Earhart lope and the Earhart wave, with the arm sharply bent, have the right degree of awkward casualness. We can see why the flier's androgynous style became chic. In all, Swank gives a fine performance as a woman who was both willful and eager to please. Yet except for one fiery moment—when Earhart chews out a balky pilot whose heavy drinking reminds her of her alcoholic father—it's not an exciting performance, and, the way the movie has been conceived, it can't be. Earhart was the first woman to fly the Atlantic solo; she accomplished many other airborne feats and became an active campaigner for women's rights. She was a genuine heroine, but I can think of little reason to celebrate her as blandly as the director Mira Nair has done here. "Amelia" is handsome yet predictable and high-minded—not a dud, exactly, but too proper, too reserved for its swaggering subject.

The narrative of Earhart's life—constructed by the screenwriters Ron Bass and Anna Hamilton Phelan, who adapted biographies by Mary S. Lovell and Susan Butler—is framed by her doomed last flight. She took off from Miami on June 1, 1937, at the age of thirty-nine, intending to circumnavigate the world at the equator. But somewhere near her mid-Pacific goal of Howland Island she and her navigator, Fred Noonan (Christopher Eccleston), disappeared. Once this frame is established, the movie swings to the past: a rural Kansas girl, coltish, dreamy, physically fearless, Amelia starts stunt flying in her twenties and is then tapped as the first woman passenger on a cross-Atlantic flight. She puts up with her passive status grumpily (Swank's mouth turns downward in irritation), but George Putnam (Richard Gere), the publishing heir and public-relations genius who set up Earhart's passage, turns her into a national celebrity, with her own line of clothes and luggage. The movie is candid about Putnam's mercenary interest in Earhart, and Gere plays him as a shrewd, polite, fussy opportunist who gradually falls in love with her and accepts her conditions for marriage—that she will be free to do as she likes.

Hilary Swank plays Earhart in Mira Nair's new movie.

All this is presented with no more than moderate energy. The elegant atmosphere of thirties high life—men in dinner suits, women in backless silk dresses, a black torch singer undulating in a supper club—is enjoyable enough, but Nair can't seem to find the dramatic center of it. The film accumulates detail, dutifully, rather than gathering significance. I was hoping that things would pick up when Ewan McGregor makes his entrance as Gene Vidal (Gore's father), the airline executive who becomes Earhart's business partner. Earhart's affair with Vidal has been whispered about for decades, but Nair treats it delicately, remotely. What does Earhart want from Vidal that she's not getting from the faithful and attentive Putnam? If it's sex, the explosion isn't on the screen. (The filmmakers, some seventy-five years after the fact, appear eager to protect Earhart from scandal even as they're publicizing the affair.) Not only are the adultery scenes ultra-civilized; Nair's direction in general lacks rhythm and urgency—the characters talk to each other placidly, in semiformal complete sentences. There's only one bit of mischief: young Gore, fond of Amelia, asks her why she can't be married to his father and to Putnam, too. Even as a child, it seems, Vidal wanted to be a swinger.

Again and again, as Earhart soars around the world, Stuart Dryburgh's cinematography captures the landscapes below, filled with scampering animals and native children. The overall visual style is pretty, even luscious, in a familiar, *National Geographic* sort of way. But Martin Scorsese did a lot better in "The Aviator," by aggressively styling Howard Hughes and the heroic-aviation period as a kind of Art Deco poster. Alas, the impression of fervent cliché isn't helped by Earhart's remarks. "I want to be free . . . to be a vagabond of the air" may be a real quote, but

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it sounds too much like a feminist inspirational handbook. The air, she says, becomes "a simple, safe, beautiful place where everything is comprehensible," a line that might resonate if the rest of life were incomprehensible to her. But, as far as we can tell, with Putnam's constant help she gets along extremely well.

The most stirring sight in the movie is the airplanes, including the Lockheed Vega 5B, a red, short-winged mono-engine job, as fat as a bumblebee. They're like the planes in an old children's book, and, after watching Amelia take off in these picturesque crates, we're relieved to see her in something with the size and the heft of the Lockheed Electra 10E, a twin-engine silver beauty—though that plane turns out to be the vehicle of her destruction. The scenes of missed communications between Earhart and the radio operators stationed off Howland Island are an anguished reconstruction of what feels like simple technical inadequacy, yet the filmmakers don't dramatize this final flight as the half-insane event that it was. Earhart was warned that she would run out of fuel. Was she foolish and vain as well as heroic? Irony, however, doesn't fall within Nair's range. Made straight in this way, "Amelia" should have come out in 1940, or even in 1970, when a rebellious and physically courageous woman was a fresh and bracing sight. At this point, the picture fails to break new ground in the air.

Valery Gergiev, the artistic director of the Mariinsky Theatre (formerly the Kirov Opera and Ballet), in St. Petersburg—a whirlwind who is also the principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, and a guest conductor just about everywhere else—advises a young conductor standing before the members of an orchestra to tell them "with your eyes." Gergiev tells them with his eyes, chin, gut, elbows, and hands, which appear, alternately, as claws and as palms flattened and fluttering like leaves. Allan Miller's documentary feature "You Cannot Start Without Me—Valery Gergiev, Maestro" doesn't solve the question that has puzzled music lovers for two decades: How does Gergiev do everything he does? There's no easy explanation for physical and spiritual energy like this. But it's clear from Miller's interviews with Gergiev that he sees himself as the heir to Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, and Shostakovich. Working with the London Symphony on Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring," he groans, roars, and coos. He's very precise about details of coloration, and the players seem awed: they're getting their Russianness from the ground up. With his heavy eyebrows and dark stubble, Gergiev's appearance is the furthest remove from the voluptuous elegance of the white-maned Bernstein or von Karajan. This conductor looks like a thug. His mode of expression may be soulful, yet the movie, though conventional in form, brings us close to an elemental ferocity just barely held in check. It's a temperament that has its drawbacks. As Gergiev makes clear, he is trapped by his ambition into making an endless series of commitments that, in effect, destroy the rest of his life. In a moment that is both touching and slightly embarrassing, he holds his three young children and admits that he isn't much of a father. His gifts lie elsewhere.

Fanatical artistic dedication is also the subject of Frederick Wiseman's "La Danse," a portrait of the Paris Opera Ballet. Miller lets us know, with titles, who is performing and where; Wiseman, proceeding in his customary manner, presents long scenes without identifying anyone. We're on our own, which makes us feel, as Wiseman haunts the stairways, rehearsal studios, and watery subterranean corridors of the Palais Garnier (the Ballet's home), that we have become, with him, phantoms of the opera. The Ballet is a huge organism, at the center of which is Brigitte Lefèvre, the tentacular administrative head. She's a little overbearing, and Wiseman, with evident pleasure, turns back to the dancers, whom he photographs not in the manner of the commercial cinema, where bodies are broken up into threshing limbs, but in full frame, top to bottom, with space around them, so that we can see the incredible moves the dancers are capable of, along with, inevitably, their mistakes, missteps, and gradual improvements. So many of Wiseman's films have been about institutions (a police force, a battered-women's shelter) that didn't work well, or that merely penned up broken-down Americans who fall off the tracks of economic and physical success. It's a joyous experience to see an institution in full flower—to see not dereliction and disorder but the many forms of striving and virtue. ♦

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The Front Row, a blog about movies.

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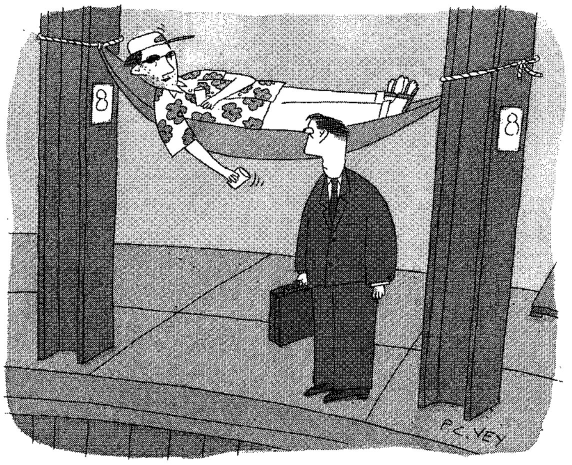
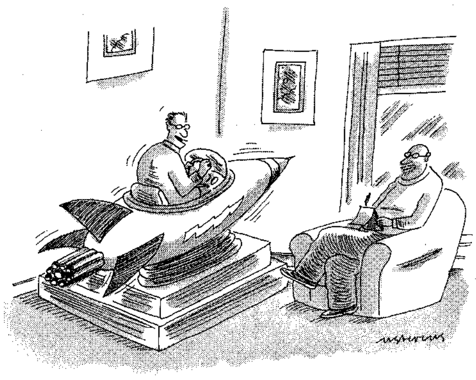
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Frank Cotham, must be received by Sunday, November 1st. The finalists in the October 19th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the November 16th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the U.S. or Canada (except Quebec) age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Brother, can you spare a lime?"
Alex Williams, Los Altos, Calif.



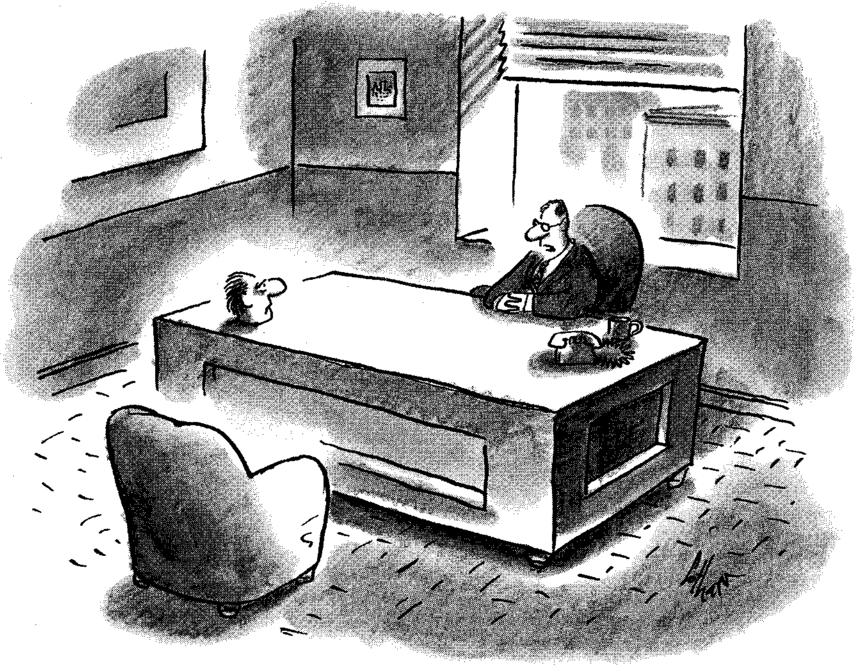
THE FINALISTS

"I think this can all be traced back to my mother ship."
Patrick Kelsey, Manheim, Pa.

"Can we do therapy for just five more minutes? Please? Please?"
Carolyn Smaka, Cranford, N.J.

"What do you mean time's up? I just put another quarter in."
Annette Gasparon, Secane, Pa.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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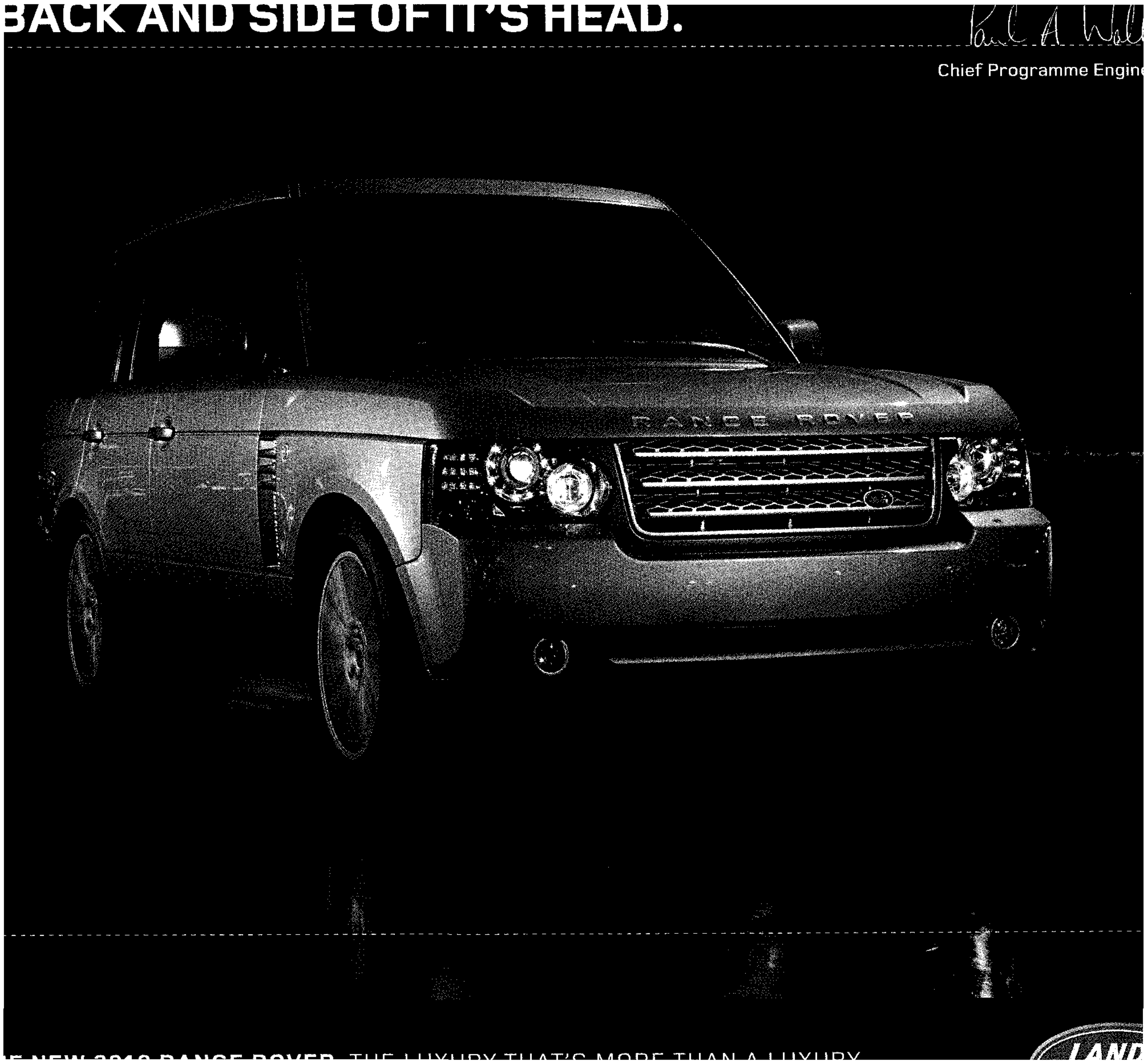
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